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The Sea's Way

ARGOSY

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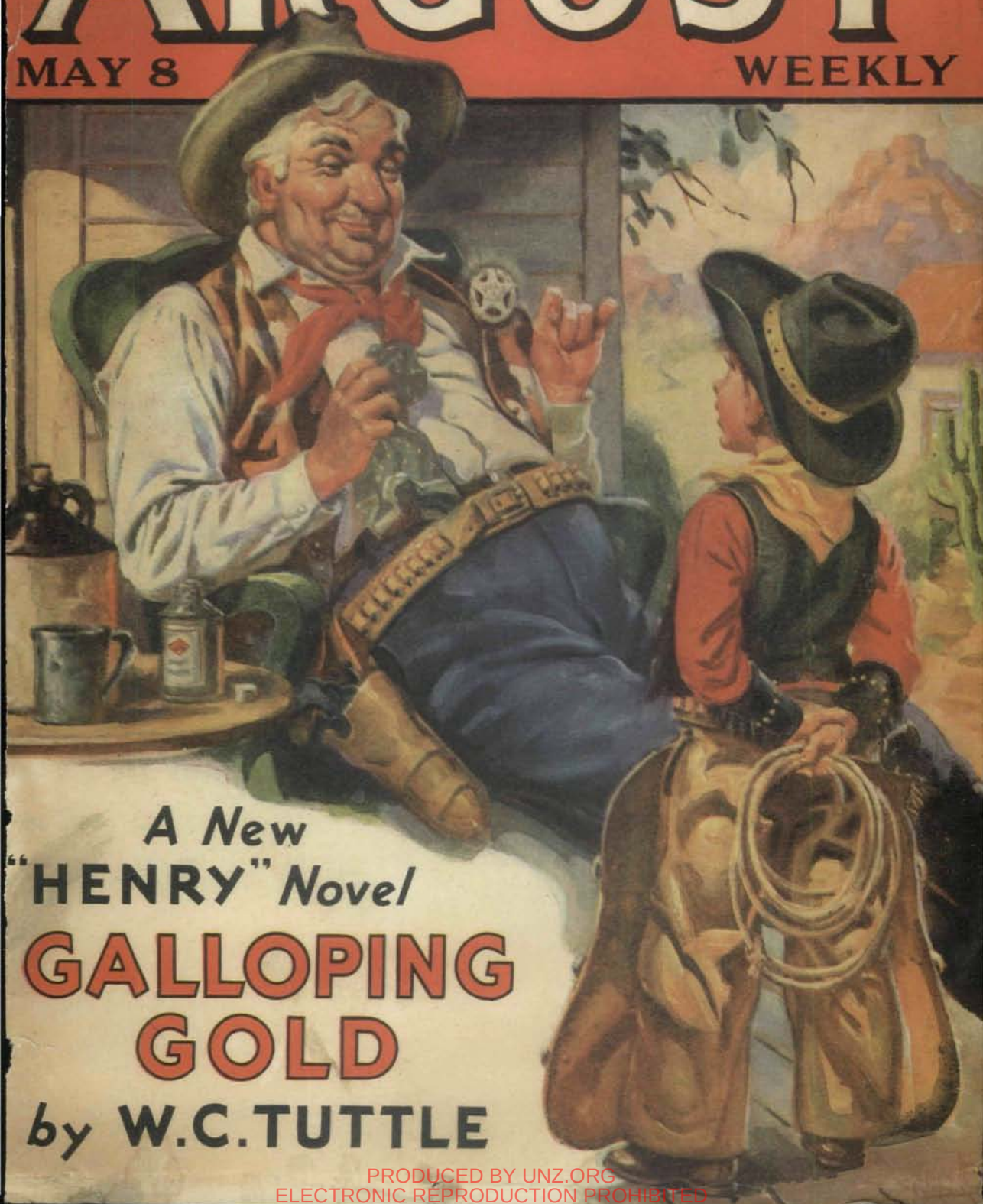

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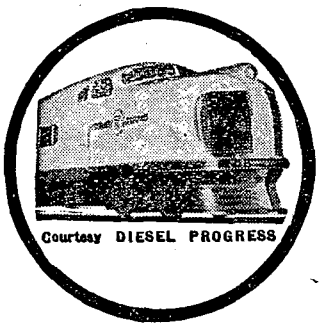

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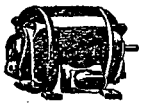

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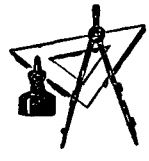

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ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

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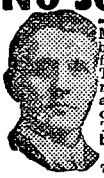

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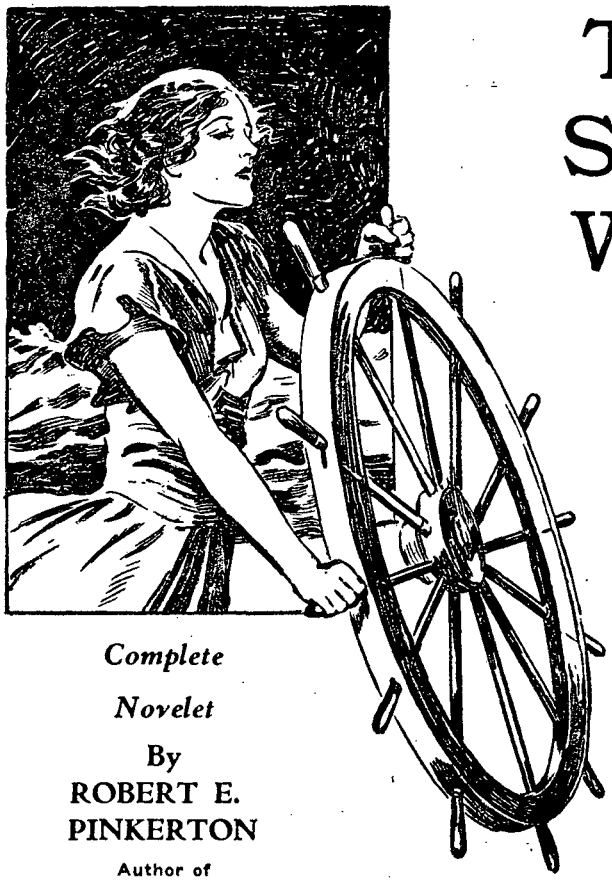

The Sea's Way

The Lovely Lady had once been a trim and graceful yacht. Now, betrayed by the war and dishonored by prohibition, she plied a coastwise drudgery with havoc in her wake.

Complete Novelet

By
ROBERT E. PINKERTON

Author of
"The Fighting Prodigal,"
"Bonds of the Northland," etc.

STAN WILLIAMS asked Ben Hicks a civil question and received a most uncivil answer, and because Stan had come up the coast to gather information and not to pick fights, he turned and walked out of Hicks' store at Alder's Landing.

Hicks was broad and thick and had a nasty eye, but these were not reasons why Stan took his remarks without battle. He had never been so quickly and so inexplicably aroused to combat. Yet he had a level head and knew it wouldn't do.

He went down to the pier and sat on a stringpiece, and thus saw the *Lovely Lady* as she swung around the rocky point and slid in for a landing. Stan watched breathlessly. The *Lovely Lady* had started life as the idol of a British nobleman. She had been sold out by the war and shamed by rum-running pirates. She had left home heavily weighted and had arrived in Vancouver empty, with the black mark against her of an unlogged delay off the California coast.

She had become respectable then, and menial, hauling loggers and their supplies, and fish and cannery workers. Her fine teak decks and paneling were chewed by steel caulks. Her tapering bowsprit had been sawed to an ugly stub and her slender masts were festooned with cargo booms.

Though scarred and ill arrayed, she was still a noble lady. Nothing could distort the grace of her hull, the sweet rake of sticks and funnel or her proud bearing in the water. Stan Williams, who knew and loved ships, felt a queer

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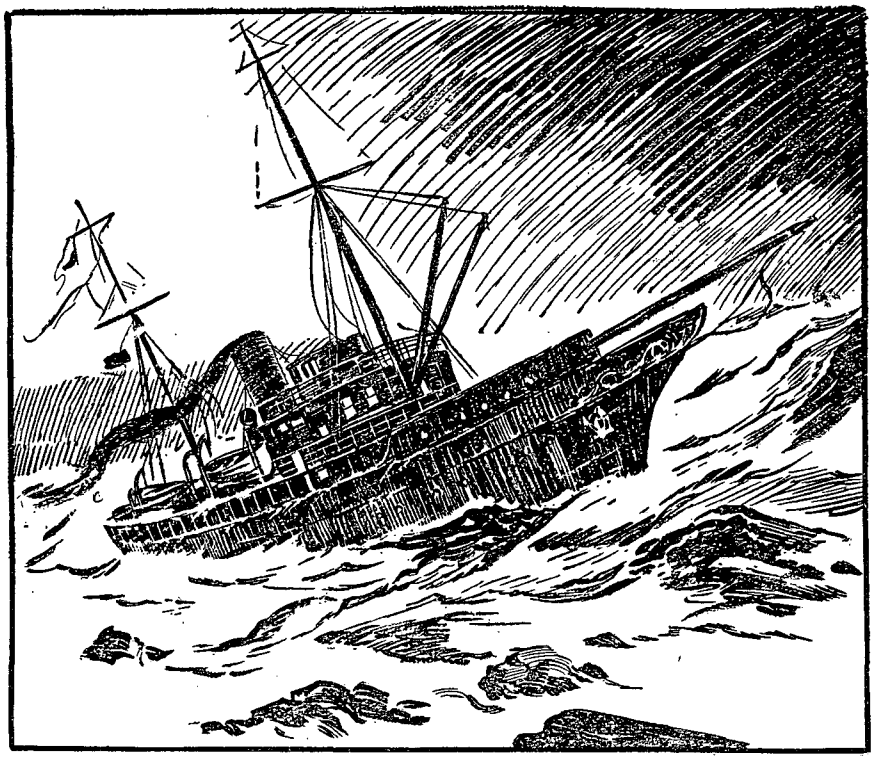

sensation in his throat as he watched her. He believed that he had never seen anything so beautiful.

While he sat there, staring, engrossed by that rare beauty of perfect, sheer line, a soft voice came from the bridge.

"Would you mind takin' a line, lad?"

Stan jumped to his feet. His gaze swept an empty pier. He was astonished that no one had come to help the ship tie up; then the weighted end of a heaving line fell at his feet.

No straining with winches was necessary to bring the *Lovely Lady* alongside. She came in of herself, in a stately manner, as a duchess might enter her box at the opera. Stan made the lines tight, and she was at rest.

Her master left the bridge and stepped onto the pier. He was about sixty, straight, thin and of surprising dignity despite a worn uniform coat and a faded cap.

"Thank you, lad," he said to Stan in his soft voice.

"It's a pleasure to take a line from a craft like her!" Stan exclaimed.

"She is sweet," the master said as his gaze swept lovingly along her scarred decks. "And as good as she is beautiful. All we can ask of women and of ships."

Heavy feet sounded on the pier and Ben Hicks came stamping toward them.

"Move over to the south side!" he shouted angrily. "You ought to know the *Quadra's* comin' in."

"Batten a hatch over that mouth, my man," the *Lovely Lady's* master said. "I have a right to moor where I please

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at a government pier. And bring the mail bag, as the regulations require."

"I ain't got the mail ready and it won't be for an hour," Hicks retorted. "Get the old tub away or I'll cut her lines."

"You will not cut a line, and I will report your tardiness to the postal service. You have delayed the *Lovely Lady* for the last time."

"Oh, I have, eh?" Hicks snarled. "Get back on your sinkin' scow, you old barnacle."

He shoved against the captain's chest with a big paw, and when the captain struck the arm away Hicks smashed him in the face with the other hand.

Stan Williams had strolled away, interested in the details of this conversion of a yacht into a coastwise craft. He whirled in time to see the *Lovely Lady's* master crash to the pier and Hicks kick at the inert body with a heavy boot.

STAN jumped forward. But at his first step, a girl vaulted the ship's rail and rushed on Hicks. Her small fists rained blows at his face until a backhand blow sent her reeling to the edge of the pier, where she fell.

Hicks turned, swung a foot, but Stan was upon him. He had been incensed by Hicks in the store. Now he was ablaze. He tore in without caution and without science. Unwittingly he had chosen the best attack. Hicks was far heavier, a short, thick-bodied, heavy-limbed man built to rough and tumble specifications. Only an ax, a club, or concentrated fury could down him, and Stan had the fury.

The very speed of his attack gave him further advantage, and he had a rare instinct for timing and distance. Long, sweeping punches to Hicks' thick waist counted heavily. Then he raised his sights, sent a sudden cross to the jaw. Hicks went down.

Stan was unaware that the *Lovely Lady's* crew had come on deck. He stood over Hicks and, as the man's eyes opened, jerked him to his feet.

"Get your hands up!" Stan grunted savagely, and when Hicks had done so, Stan tore in.

He did not hear the cheer of encouragement or see the girl kneeling beside the captain with the members of the crew grouped anxiously about them. Stan was aware only of a mad desire to resculptor the evil face that swayed before him.

After he had knocked Hicks down four times, and the man was cut and bleeding, Stan cooled off enough to remember what it was all about. He prodded the man with a heavy toe.

"Go and get that mail sack!" he commanded. "Crawl if you can't walk. You had it ready. I saw you lock it."

Stan jerked Hicks to his feet, drove him ashore and into the store. There he jerked an ax handle from a bundle and, when Hicks turned upon him, directed a terrific thrust at the man's thick waist. It was effective. With Stan herding him, Hicks carried the mail sack to the pier. He threw it down and turned away. Stan stopped him.

"We're doing this right! I don't know the regulations. But you carry that bag aboard; set it down softly and apologize. Then tiptoe ashore."

A prod from the ax handle brought results. Hicks obeyed with ill grace, omitting the apology.

"Down on your knees and say you behaved like a yellow pup!" Stan commanded. "Where's the captain?"

Stan had given no heed to the crew gathered on deck. Now, as he glanced around, he saw the girl who had vaulted the rail.

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"My father is still unconscious," she said.

"Who's next in command?"

"I am the first mate."

STAN started, looked at her again. She might have just stepped from a home or an office, so far as dress and appearance were concerned. No large-framed, blowsy, harsh-voiced seafaring woman this. He had never met so attractive a girl. He saw a welt on her cheek where Hicks had struck her.

"Down on your knees!" he shouted with sudden ferocity. "And apologize as if you meant it."

He started toward Hicks, the ax handle raised, but the girl spoke.

"I don't want any apology from him," she said crisply. "What's it worth? Get the scum off the ship."

Hicks went, leaping over the rail to avoid Stan.

"That was simply great—what you did!" the girl exclaimed as she held out her hand.

Stan took it awkwardly. He wondered if he had been a bit melodramatic. In his confusion he could only stammer.

"And I wouldn't advise you to stay at Alder's Landing," she continued. "The people here are all for Hicks. We'd be very glad to have you come aboard."

"I'd like to," Stan said eagerly. "My name is Stan Williams. And are you really the first officer?"

"I have master's papers," she smiled.

"And me proud of a first mate's ticket!" he exclaimed. "I'll get my dunnage."

He was back at once. The *Lovely Lady's* lines had been cast off and as soon as he stepped aboard, the ship drew away from the pier. The girl beckoned Stan from the bridge.

While she was busy getting the ship out of the tiny cove, Stan examined several framed documents in the wheelhouse. One was a master's license made out to Angus Macaire. Beneath it, another proclaimed Dorothy Macaire capable of commanding vessels of limited tonnage in coastal waters.

A middle-aged man entered the wheelhouse. He smiled at Stan. "I was asleep and missed the best of it," he exclaimed as he shook hands. "Which I'll go to my grave regretting."

"Mr. Craig, the second mate, Mr. Williams," Dorothy said without turning her head. "How's father, Mike?"

"Still unconscious, Dot. Two ribs broken."

Dot Macaire turned an anxious face while a hand reached out to the telegraph and moved the lever to full speed astern. The bow swung quickly toward the entrance.

"Handles like a motor car!" Stan cried in admiration.

"Better!" Michael Craig declared. "Watch that drift alongside. She turns in little more than her length."

"Mike," Dot interrupted. "Mr. Williams has a second mate's ticket. Father won't be on the bridge for weeks. What do you think?"

"His ticket may be stolen or forged, and he may think a course protractor is an advertising novelty, but he's exactly the man we need," Craig answered without hesitation.

"Hundred and a quarter a month," Dot said. "You can move in with Mike. Four hour watches is the theory, but they get bunched, somehow. Take over now, mister. Think about it, Mr. Williams. I'm going down to see father."

Stan stood staring after her until he heard a chuckle.

"It's all true," Michael Craig said.

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"She knows this coast better'n the man who dug the twists in it. Finer skipper than her dad. She can dance like a gull's feather floating on a breeze. Reads more books than I knew were printed. She's first officer and purser and freight clerk. Knows every man, woman, and child in Far Inlet by their first names. Straightforward and frank as if she were your sister and if you mistake that last you'll have every man aboard, from cook's boy to master, giving you what you gave Hicks."

"*That* wasn't necessary."

"Valuable advice just the same. And you'll work fifteen hours a day, and lend a hand at unloading and may be stand an oiler's watch occasionally, and miss a payday at times. And that Hicks business was only a starter. This looks like a cargo and passenger packet, but she's really a man o' war."

"I can't turn down a snap like that." Stan laughed.

THE *Lovely Lady* ran under forced draft to Cal's Cove, where a mission hospital, a shake cabin on a cedar float, received the still unconscious Captain Angus Macaire. The doctor said there might be concussion, but there was no evidence of internal injuries.

"Don't worry," he assured Dot. "He's tough and there's no serious hurt."

"We've got to make the run," the girl said.

"He'll be talking to you when you come back in three days."

It was dark and raining when the *Lovely Lady* left Cal's Cove, and Stan Williams understood why Black Basin was so named when the ship crept into the float there an hour later. A yellow dot, the light of a coal oil lantern, only made the pit beneath the high, straight cliffs the darker, and Stan, on the bridge, marveled that the girl at the engine room telegraph could know where she was going.

But she slid in so skillfully and so accurately that the ship came to rest beside the big float with scarcely a jar. It was the down trip, and they did not remain long. Soon the *Lovely Lady* was drawing away. Stan was at the stern, a raised open deck, helping get the line in smartly. The deck was slippery, there was no light, and a sudden gust of wind and rain blinded him.

The deck hand ran forward in answer to a call. Stan believed he heard him returning. He did not glance up, and then he felt himself falling. He knew he was only ten feet above the water, and yet he fell and fell for hours. The darkness was sprinkled with pinpoints of bright light, but they soon ceased and left him tumbling through infinite space.

II

STAN WILLIAMS did not remember striking at the end of his long fall. He opened his eyes to find the reflection of yellow lamplight on the shake walls of a cabin. Across the room a man was reading a newspaper. A gentle movement and the sound of rain hissing on the water told Stan he was on a float.

"Did I come through the roof?" he asked.

The man grinned. He was past middle age, but bright, youthful eyes bespoke his alertness and good nature. "Up from the cellar."

He rose, and his height was accentuated by white woolen undershirt and khaki trousers, uniform of the British Columbia handlogger.

"You off the *Lovely Lady?*" he asked.

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"I fell a mile or so off her stern," Stan answered, and he put his hand to his head to find it bandaged.

"Hit your head when you went overside probably. And you hadn't been drinking."

"I was coiling down the stern line. I—" Stan broke off. The scene came back to him. He had been alone, and he had believed he had heard the deck hand returning. He tried to picture that last conscious moment. The deck was wet but he could not remember slipping. Why should he have slipped, anyhow?

"What do you know about the *Lovely Lady?*" he asked.

"Weren't you working on her?" the handlogger countered in a puzzled tone.

"I was second mate. Had been for two hours. Went aboard at Alder's Landing."

"How they'd come to be picking up a mate there?"

"Give me a drink of water and I'll tell you."

Jeff Vail, Far Inlet handlogger, listened in silence to Stan's story, and Stan, mystified by what had happened, told the whole thing—except his certainty that he had been shoved from the after deck. To his further surprise he discovered that Jeff Vail was in no way astonished.

"People don't come any finer than Captain Angus Macaire and his daughter," Jeff said. "Handloggers and fishermen in Far Inlet haven't any better friends. But the Macaires have enemies, and this is part of it."

"But who—" Stan began.

"You won't believe it, but I studied Latin once, and I know that all Gaul was divided into three parts. So was this coast, only the Empire Steamship Company and the Coastways Company did the dividing, each agreeing to certain districts. That made two parts. Then Captain Macaire got the *Lovely Lady* and cut himself out a piece of the Empire's part. And he cut it out solid. All Far Inlet and a strip of coast below. He gave such good service and helped the people so much he drove the Empire out. That was after Marvin Dawson got control of the Empire, after old Captain Williams died. Dawson was—Say! Williams! You any relation to the old captain?"

Stan's hand over his eyes clenched. His head ached terrifically. For a moment he did not reply, though he felt Jeff Vail's gaze upon him. At last he slowly shook his head.

"Well, this Dawson—he's a brother-in-law of old Captain Williams—he'd like Far Inlet back again. He's hit time and again, and always below the belt. Like this Hicks business. We're going to have a big paper mill at the mouth of the inlet, and the Macaires want the contract. Thousands of tons of supplies, and then a big town afterward with lots of passengers and freight.

"But they've got to have another ship. The *Lovely Lady* isn't big enough. They've paid money down on a freighter. Things were looking up for the Macaires when—Say! Did you ever see a nicer girl than Dot? But you only knew her an hour or so. She can do a man's work better'n most men, and she's still a damned sweet girl. In my mind, she's the lovely lady."

Stan flushed. He was thinking the same thing. "What happened?"

"Dawson slaps on a boat on the Far Inlet run. Doesn't carry any passengers or a pound of freight, and the Macaires have the mail contract. But he keeps the boat runnin', and pretty soon we learn why. The *Hernando* and the *Lovely Lady* come together at a landing. Us Far Inlet people saw it. My

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idea is they planned to sink the *Lovely Lady,* and in such a way that they couldn't be blamed. Captain Whelan of the *Hernando* hung around until the *Lady* came in. We wondered about it at the time. But Dot was too clever for him. She can turn the *Lady* on a dollar bill. The *Hernando* was damaged and, of course, Dawson started suit."

"Trying to cripple them financially," Stan said.

"And every way!" Jeff Vail retorted with sudden anger.

"The Macaires have got to keep schedule. They've got to prove to the paper mill people they can fulfill a contract. So Dawson puts Ben Hicks at Alders' Landing to make trouble. He's done it, delaying the boat, cutting lines in the dark, and now he beats up an old man. Wait till the handloggers hear about that!"

"The Far Inlet people are for the Macaires?"

"Are they for 'em? Boy! There's nothing a handlogger or fisherman wouldn't do for 'em. And why shouldn't they? Dot shops for the women, buying hats and such things a woman likes picked out special. The old captain and the mates run errands for us on their one day in town. If a man gets hurt, and the weather's bad, they'll turn the *Lady* around and run him to the hospital, and charge only the regular fare. Why, the Macaires *own* Far Inlet!"

Stan had raised himself in bed and was watching Jeff Vail. Jeff returned the stare with kindly, inquisitive eyes. And they were shrewd eyes, too. Suddenly Vail spoke.

"You was hit first and shoved off the *Lovely Lady.*"

"How did you know?" Stan demanded.

"It seems to fit."

"I've been thinking the same thing, but I haven't been absolutely certain. It was dark, and the wind and the rain—"

"Just the time for dirty work. And I'll say you're tough. Know where I picked you up? In the middle of the inlet. I'd left Black Basin, coming home, and I almost ran you down. You were clean out, and plugging right along. You must be hard to kill."

Jeff did not veil his admiration. A will to live that persists through black daze wins the esteem of any man who is accustomed to hard and dangerous toil.

"The point is"—Stan changed the subject—"I've got to get back aboard the *Lovely Lady.*"

"She'll be up in a couple of days. Better stay around and rest until then."

STAN WILLIAMS recovered quickly. His scalp had required several stitches, sewed by Jeff's competent hands. For two days, or rather two evenings because Jeff spent the daylight hours on the mountainside felling cedar, he talked with Jeff about the Macaires and the Far Inlet situation.

"I'm so behind with this boom of cedar I'm going to ask you to row to Black Basin," Jeff said. "The *Lady* will be in about noon and I don't want to lose the daylight."

Black Basin consisted of a store, residence, bunkhouse, blacksmith shop and chicken house, all afloat on rafts of cedar logs at the base of a straight-walled, semi-circular cliff in a tiny cove. Once a week handloggers from "shows" on the inlet gathered for "boat night," which as often as not came in the daytime, and more than fifty were there when Stan Williams arrived in Jeff Vail's skiff.

Most of them owned gas boats, and

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these craft, caulk-scarred and generally uncared for, were moored thickly along the boom sticks that served as sidewalks. They were a fine lot of men, clumping about in their steel-spiked shoes, laughing and gossiping, talking logs. They did not speak to Stan, though they looked curiously at his bandaged head.

Stan discovered quickly that Jeff Vail had been right about the attitude of these people. Ben Hicks' attack on Captain Macaire was the chief subject of conversation. Indignation, even suggestions of reprisal, could be overheard from every group.

The *Lovely Lady* slid in that afternoon to find a silent crowd packed on the float. Dot Macaire was on the bridge. As she came abreast, a big handlogger called gently, "How's the captain, Dot?"

The girl recognized the tribute of that silence and the single, homely question. Tears came to her eyes. "He's better," she called down. "We saw him this morning. Two broken ribs and badly bruised, but no concussion."

The cheer that greeted this news relieved the tension. Men struggled for the honor of taking the *Lovely Lady's* lines. Women called greetings to Dot. Stan, in the rear of the crowd, discovered a choking sensation in his throat. Nothing Jeff Vail had said could so adequately portray the hold the *Lovely Lady* and her crew had upon the people of Far Inlet.

The bridge soon swarmed with women gathering about Dot Macaire. Handloggers, laughing and jesting, swooped down upon the cargo and helped carry it to the float. It was all most unseamanlike. Confusion seemed to prevail. And yet in an astonishingly short time the work of unloading was completed.

Dot scribbled notes on errands the women asked her to do for them. Mike Craig, surrounded by the men, trusted to his memory, and the handloggers evidently trusted it, too, as they hurled their requests at him.

Not until the *Lovely Lady* had pulled away from the float did Stan go to the bridge.

"You!" Dot Macaire cried. "We thought you'd fallen overboard!"

"I did," Stan answered with a sheepish grin.

"We put back to the Basin! We searched! No one had seen or heard of you. It was terrible! We couldn't even find the name of anyone to write to in your dunnage."

The girl's concern embarrassed Stan. He had not expected it. He had been wholly engrossed in his desire to settle with his mysterious assailant. Nor did he intend to add to her trouble by any unsupported story of an attack.

"Tripped on a stern like a lubber," he explained. "Must have cracked my head as I went overside. Came to in Jeff Vail's shack." He quickly sketched the details of the rescue and then concluded, "Do you still want a mate who can't stand on a wet deck?"

Dot Macaire frowned. "It isn't that," she said. "I had to have some one. It was a piece of luck to find Joe Mason in Vancouver. He was first mate on the *Lovely Lady* for years."

Stan had not considered this. More, than anything else in the world, he wanted to remain on the ship.

"I don't mean as mate!" he exclaimed. "Anything! Deck hand. Quartermaster. I—I—well, I'd like to show I'm some good."

"I'd like to keep you on," Dot said warmly, but we must watch costs and—"

"Never mind the pay," Stan insisted. "I'll forget it until there's an opening."

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"Neither father nor I could accept that," and he saw her stiffen.

Stan was desperate. "I want to get another crack at Hicks," he said.

It was a dirty trick, he knew, to appeal to an obligation, but the girl did not resent it. "All right," she said with a warm smile. "I'm awfully glad you're back and alive, but it will have to be as deck hand."

"Anything!" Stan grinned. "Thanks a lot."

"But are you able to work!" Dot asked anxiously as she glanced at his bandaged head.

"Watch me!" he laughed.

THE beating Stan Williams had given Ben Hicks won his immediate acceptance by the crew of the *Lovely Lady*. But the more Stan saw of the crew the more puzzled he became.

Nearly all the men had been with the ex-yacht for years, and it was more like a large family than a ship's company with the well marked cleavages between deck and engine room officers and between officers and men. The mates seldom issued an order. Every one knew his work, and devotion to the *Lovely Lady* prompted constant attention to her needs. Yet, Stan knew someone aboard was a traitor to the Macaires.

Stan would have sworn that Mike Craig was loyal, and Tom Gordon, the chief engineer. Joe Mason, the competent and assured chief mate had joined the ship after the attack. Stan knew nothing of the first and second assistant engineers, Billy Tucker and Earl Smith, or of the six deck hands, who served as quartermasters. Also there were oilers, firemen, a steward and a galley outfit, twenty-six in the ship's company not counting himself.

His belief that he had been knocked overside in Black Basin was confirmed by an inspection of the after deck. The deck was well lighted by an electric bulb on the after end of the super-structure. The bulb was not new and fresh fingermarks showed it could have been twisted loose to bring darkness.

Stan was brought in contact with all departments of the ship by the varied work assigned him. He stood tricks at the wheel, worked with the deck hands in unloading cargo and keeping the vessel clean. An oiler was injured and Stan replaced him, to become familiar with the engine room.

His first day below he made a discovery, although he scarcely recognized what it was at first, a shackle freshly cracked nearly across and lying against the skin of the ship where the wash of bilge water occasionally covered it.

The brightness of raw metal indicated that it had just been broken. Such a shackle was never used in an engine room. Tom Gordon kept his domain as neat as a spinster's parlor, was constantly prowling about his idol, the engine.

These facts aroused Stan's suspicions. A weak shackle in a piece of deck gear would cause damage, and this bright crack was being rapidly rusted over by the wash of salt water. After a few days there was no indication of a break.

And then one morning the shackle was gone. Stan looked cautiously about the engine room. No one was watching him. Tom Gordon was going over his pet, now silent. Through the thin steel skin, Stan could hear the rush and swirl of current. Instantly he leaped for the ladder.

The *Lovely Lady* had just tied up at Steep Rock. A big eddy swept through the bay and the ship was tugging and float chains were groaning.

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When Stan reached the deck he saw that the current was away from the float, and that just beneath the surface close aboard lay a nasty reef. Should the stern line part, the ship would be forced onto this reef, with certain damage to propeller and rudder.

Stan ran aft, his glance sweeping the hawser that moored the stern, and at the shore end was the familiar bright red of the rusty shackle attaching the manilla line to a steel cable eye splice.

The picture was complete. The traitor could not have chosen a better place for his barratry, or have more cleverly hidden all indication of anything but accident.

The ship trembled from the rush of the tide. Stan snatched the eye-spliced end of a hawser and reeved it through a closed chock. At that moment a surge of the tide put an increased strain on the stern line and the shackle parted.

"Quick, Jack!" Stan shouted to a handlogger. "Drop this over a cleat."

His voice spurred the man. Stan took a turn around the bitts just as the stern started to swing out. The hawser creaked, stiffened. The float chains groaned. But the line held. Stan jumped to the float, found the pieces of the shackle and slipped them into his pocket.

AS soon as the *Lovely Lady* had pulled away from Steep Rock. Stan went to Mike Craig's room. Mike was asleep, and woke up crankily.

"Look at this!" Stan whispered as he showed the broken shackle. "We nearly lost the wheel and rudder."

That roused Mike. He stared as Stan rushed on with his story.

"Have you told Dot?"

"She's got enough to worry about," Stan answered. "We ought to handle this."

"But should we? Somebody aboard this ship—Hey, young fellow. I heard you arguing with Dot for a job. Did you suspect—"

His gaze lifted to Stan's head, which no longer carried a bandage but which had been partly shaved by Jeff Vail. "And you didn't fall off the stern!" he exclaimed.

"I never thought I did," Stan answered. "Neither did Jeff Vail. He told me about the row with the Empire. The Hicks business was part of it."

"We all knew that," Mike Craig said harshly.

"I was knocked off right after I licked Hicks. It all hooks up. But who was it? You know the crew."

"I know every man in it as if he was my brother, and I couldn't point a finger at one of them."

"But there's a traitor aboard," Stan insisted.

"And it's up to us to find him. I'm glad you didn't go to Dot. The girl's worried to death now, with the Empire pressing us hard, the paper mill contract hanging fire and the captain hurt. We'll handle this without her."

Stan felt he could not have chosen a better ally. Michael Craig had been with the ship for years, knew every man aboard and every plate and rivet in the *Lovely Lady*. Now he scarcely slept, prowled constantly on his watch below. He visited the engine room, the galley, even found excuses to go in the fo'c'sle.

"You're going too strong," Stan remonstrated. "Whoever it is, he'll be wise to what you're after."

"So much the better," Mike retorted. "We want to catch him, but we've got to protect the ship first. He can do anything from wrecking the engine to putting the compass out of commission. He can open a sea valve, cut a line when

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we're moored in a bad place, smash the steering engine in the narrows. We've got two hundred feet of ship, a thousand things to watch, and there's only two of us to do it. I'd rather scare him out and save the ship than catch him and lose the *Lovely Lady.*"

"But don't get too strong. You'll be cracked over the head as I was."

"I will not. I'm on guard. I walk only in the light at night. I only wish some one would try it."

That night Mike Craig fell down the iron stairway to the bridge.

IT happened in the Gulf, on their way to Vancouver. Joe Mason had relieved Mike, who stayed to talk a few minutes as he always did, and then went down the starboard steps. Five minutes later he was found, unconscious, on deck.

Everyone believed he knew how it happened. It was a standing joke, Mike Craig's manner of going down a flight of stairs. All true seamen descend backward, with a hand on each rail. Mike did this also, but only after the first two steps. The ship's company always smiled. Two steps, then turn around to the safe way.

Stan helped carry the injured man to his room and then ran forward for a first aid kit. His foot slipped on the deck just aft the bridge and he sat down solidly, hands outspread. One hand touched a piece of warm wet cloth.

That was startling on a cool night, but as Stan picked up the cloth he found it was also greasy. And Mike had slipped! An old seaman coming down a flight of steps when the ship is on an even keel does not slip.

Quickly Stan climbed the steps. The second from the top was damp. He ran his hands across it in the dark, and near one side he found a greasy spot. Wedged against the side was a small piece of hard oil.

"The dirty rat!" Stan muttered. "Slicked the steps where Mike Craig always turns. Then got scared out before he finished cleaning up."

He went back to the deck and struck a match. Here was evidence. There might be more. A second match was flickering out when Stan caught a gleam of metal in the scuppers. Another match disclosed a double-ended spanner, a wrench used only in the engine room.

Stan was about to pick it up when he jerked his hand back. He took a handkerchief, lifted the wrench carefully, wrapped it, and carried it to his room.

Dot Macaire was awakened and took the bridge. Joe Mason and Tom Gordon looked after the injured mate, who reminded unconscious from a blow on the head. Stan watched them. He suspected every man on board now.

The wrench and the broken shackle pointed to somebody in the engine room. And the wrench, Stan saw, could have been used for no other purpose than to strike a blow. Mike undoubtedly had uncovered some bit of direct evidence. His fall was not an accident but an attempt to prevent the mate making his discovery known.

That might have been murder. Stan suddenly was appalled by the responsibility that had fallen upon him, and at once he knew he must tell Dot.

BUT when she sent for him later he did not have the strength. She was still commander of her ship, but in the droop of her shoulders, in the sagging of facial muscles, Stan read the strain that bore heavily upon her.

"We need a second mate," she said crisply.

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Stan had not foreseen that possibility. And as an officer he could do more in running down the barrator. "If you still want the place," Dot added. A trace of pleading was in her voice. For all her courage, she was carrying more than she could bear.

"Thank you, sir," he said quickly.

For a moment Stan believed she was about to break down. But she straightened. "That will be all, mister."

She was master of the ship again, aloof, alone, as ship's masters must always be. Stan cursed the ways of the sea. He wanted to take this girl in his arms and comfort her. But he could only bow to the law of centuries and depart.

Mike Craig was taken to a hospital when the *Lovely Lady* reached Vancouver, and he had not regained consciousness when she sailed on her regular run to Far Inlet. Stan had wanted to take the wrench to the police to have fingerprints on it recorded, but the ship was behind time and Dot assigned him to loading cargo. He did not even step ashore the short time they were in port.

Before departure, he decided he must take someone into his confidence, and he selected Tom Gordon. First, Stan believed the guilty man to be in the engine room. And he felt certain the little old engineer was loyal. Tom was devoted to the marvelous Scotch engine, and his attitude toward Dot was that of an adoring uncle.

But Stan found no opportunity to talk to Tom Gordon alone. Dot Macaire made up for lost sleep in the fair weather, leaving the navigation to Joe Mason and Stan. When Stan was off watch, Tom was either asleep or barking and busy in the engine room. And his whole manner showed his low opinion of junior deck officers when Stan entered the engine room.

The weather changed. Dot came to the bridge. When they reached Black Basin on a dark night, half a gale was roaring down between the great white peaks that flank Far Inlet.

The boomsticks at Black Basin were jammed with gas boats and the float was packed with men and women. Dot was busy distributing purchases she had made and taking new orders, but she hurried the unloading.

For the *Lovely Lady* was behind schedule. Landings had been difficult to make. And she was heavily burdened for points up the inlet. It was no easy task, working out of that hole on a dark stormy night, but Dot accomplished it as quietly and as surely as other young women might wield a lip stick.

IT was black dark in the canyon between the mountains, and the wind roared down from the peaks. Dot did not leave the bridge any more than any good skipper would abandon his charge to others in anything but fair weather. She was standing the watch with Joe Mason when, several miles from Black Basin, the regular beat of the screw suddenly ceased.

"We've burned out two bearings," Tom wailed up the speaking tube. "Never happened to me before. I'd just felt them."

Dot Macaire did not hear the last. She was already looking at the chart. "One hundred fathoms and no bottom." Right up to the straight walls of the inlet! Nothing to hang on to! Water deeper than a ship's cable. The gale roaring down! Steep walls against which the *Lovely Lady* would be driven. She was doomed.

Joe Mason knew that, too. Being a man, with years of the sea behind him, he assumed leadership.

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"We'll trust to luck until we strike," he said. "Then put the boats over."

"We're not going to lose this ship!" Dot cried savagely. "Get off the bridge."

"But, Dot! You can't hope to anchor. It's a—"

"Mister! I said to get off the bridge."

"Sorry, Dot," Joe said humbly. "I didn't see any chance, and—"

"We're still afloat. We'll make that chance. We've got to. Ask Tom when he expects to turn a wheel."

She gauged the wind, gave orders to the quartermaster, trying to keep the ship headed into the gale as long as she had steerage way.

"A couple of hundred feet here may save us in the end," she said to Stan as he came running up to the bridge. "Mister, have the bo's'n try to find bottom with the lead."

The wind swept down the inlet in heavy gusts. Out there alone on the bridge, Dot estimated its force, and the consequences. To herself she admitted there was no hope. She knew every inch of shoreline and each cliff and peak and twist in Far Inlet. She knew there was no bottom for an anchor to grab in that narrow gut among the mountains.

And with williwaws howling down from the mile-high peaks, the *Lovely Lady* was at their mercies. She might drive for an hour or two, but in the end she would bring up against the base of a mountain. There was little sea, but a heavy sea was not necessary for her destruction. Sharp points of granite would rip open her sides as she scraped along.

"It can't happen to her!" Dot Macaire cried defiantly.

Joe Mason came out of the wheel house and heard. He understood. It was not a question of property loss or even of loyalty. Seamen love ships for themselves, for their proved qualities. It is an affection that does not exist between humans and any other inanimate object. Dot had bowed to disaster to the Macaire fortunes. But she could not accept the death of the splendid creature of steel which was in her charge.

III

"THE chief says the crankpin bearings of the high pressure and intermediate cylinders have gone," the mate reported. "No chance to turn a wheel inside of ten hours."

"Thank you, mister. We'll let out the anchor with all the cable we have. Might catch on a ledge."

Stan called up that they had not been able to find bottom with more than a hundred fathoms of line. Dot called orders to the bo's'n, and immediately the rattle of steel cable began.

The endlessness of it was terrifying. Down. Down . . . always straight down, it went. Suddenly the sound ceased.

"To the last fathom," Stan called.

Dot did not answer. The wind had turned the *Lovely Lady* and she was driving broadside before it.

"Nothing but a tow will save us," Joe whispered.

Dot took a bearing on a white patch on a cliff but a rain squall quickly obscured it. "Do you know anything else to do, mister?" she pleaded.

Joe did not answer. He knew nothing.

Suddenly the whole ship trembled. She surged ahead, shivered, was still. Men came up from the engine room like monkeys climbing a stick, believing she had struck. Dot knew the anchor had caught on a pinnacle rock far down in the depths of the inlet. She waited breathlessly, and the *Lovely Lady* be-

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gan to swing. Slowly but surely, the ship was coming up into the wind. The anchor had caught . . . and held.

Tom Gordon climbed to the bridge, grimy and excited. "Hold hard!" he cried. "Give me ten hours."

He was gone. The ship surged back on her cable.

"How is she, mister?" Dot called to Stan.

"No scope," Stan answered. "Mostly straight up and down."

They waited. They could do nothing more. The ship's fate rested on the nature of the grip the anchor had taken far beneath them. And there was no way to learn.

Stan came back to the bridge. He and Joe and Dot hung over the rail. They did not know it rained. They only knew the wind was increasing, that the inlet acted as a funnel for the gale, that at any moment the steel claw down in the depths might let loose of the pinnacle rock on which it had happened to catch.

The whole ship waited. Every man aboard knew what the signal would be. The black gang, toiling beside the engine, was tensed for the jarring shudder that would run through the *Lovely Lady*.

And it came. The anchor was jerked loose by a terrifying blast. It caught again, slipped, caught, slipped. The whole ship shivered, and suddenly was still. The bow swung off. Again the *Lovely Lady* was driving broadside before the gale.

"We can't hope for that again," Joe Mason said.

They all knew they had probably caught the one ledge in the inlet which rose high enough for their anchor.

"Can't you shackle on more cable?" Dot asked.

"It's all out," Stan answered.

They waited. They could do nothing else. The gale tore at them. The *Lovely Lady* lurched and swung before the gale. Some place down there in the darkness, she would strike.

Dot retreated to the shelter of the wheel house. For her, the end had come. Joe and Stan followed. Little pools of water gathered about their boots as it drained from their oilskins. The quartermaster still stood at the wheel, gripping the spokes.

"That is all," Dot said, and the man departed.

Stan did not speak. He knew what the girl suffered. Joe walked back and forth looking out, first on the port side, then on the starboard.

"We're driving fast," he exclaimed suddenly. "There's Black Basin!"

"It can't be!" Dot cried. "We're miles above it."

"But there's a light."

"It's a gas boat," Stan said. "See it swing. Jeff Vail, probably. He lives up this way."

Dot leaped for the whistle cord and began tugging at it. She blew long blasts, then short and rapid ones.

"Jeff's coming," Stan said at last.

They watched him. His masthead light swung in great arcs as he rolled broadside in the chop. In ten minutes he was bobbing in the lee of the *Lovely Lady*.

"Is there a tug in the inlet?" Dot called.

"No, but—you wait."

THE clatter of the gas engine's exhaust banged against the steel side of the ship. The dim yellow masthead lights scurried before the wind.

"What's he got on his mind?" Joe Mason demanded.

"I know!" Dot cried. "Mister, get out the longest hawser. Cut smaller

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line into fifty-foot lengths and splice them into the hawser every thirty feet. Get going!"

Joe and Stan tumbled down the stairs, bellowing for the crew. Dot remained on the bridge, heedless of the rain. She was looking down the inlet, watching a tiny yellow light bobbing in the sea. At last it was swallowed in the rain squalls.

A half hour passed and Dot did not move. Her eyes smarted as they strained against the darkness. Suddenly she called to the men beneath her.

"They're coming! See the lights!"

She pointed toward the flickering spots of light which showed up against the base of the mountains in the direction of Black Basin.

"They can't tow us!" Joe shouted.

"They must," the girl answered shortly.

"Four and six-horse engines?"

"They'll do it," Dot insisted. "They must."

"A school of herring trying to tow a whale!"

The lights came nearer, a swarm of them resolved into a long line as the faster gas boats surged ahead. They pounded and splashed against the chop. Through the rain squalls the crew aboard the *Lovely Lady* could see the swinging, bobbing lights.

Stan was on the bridge now. Everyone watched the approaching gas boats and cursed the wind that slowed them down. And then Joe Mason, pacing restlessly, discovered that they had driven close to the west side of the inlet.

He drew Stan aside and told him. "And Dot thinks those put-puts can keep us off!"

Stan himself had little faith in their chances, but he was willing to give the gas boats every bit of help, and he ran down to the deck to see that the line was ready.

Jeff Vail, in the best powered craft, was the first to arrive. He took the end of the hawser, made fast and was away.

His boat could do nothing but stretch out the line from which the shorter lengths hung. Dot snapped on the searchlight, directed it toward the hawser, and one by one, out of the darkness, the handloggers appeared, made fast and began to pull.

The first dozen accomplished nothing. But more gas boats came, each adding its mite. The searchlight revealed them, pitching and rolling in the chop. Spray flew high. It seemed doubtful if some of the smaller craft could weather the sea.

But they kept chugging and gradually the bow swung out across the wind. The *Lovely Lady's* drift had been checked but her stern swung toward a towering cliff. Every man aboard believed she would strike. The one woman did not. She refused to look aft.

"We'll pull free!" Dot whispered to Stan again and again.

And after five interminable minutes they did.

"I COULD a' touched the rocks with a ten-foot pole," Joe Mason reported. "Now if they can get us across the wind . . ."

In the black night, with the gale coming in heavy gusts through that sea canyon among the mountains, the struggle went on. They were moving down the inlet, but whether they could reach the opposite side before the wind had swept them past Black Basin was another matter.

"If we miss the entrance we're done for," Joe Mason said. "Ledges off that low point beyond, and wind's on shore."

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"We'll make it," Dot said.

The fight went on—maddening because no one could tell in the darkness whether it was a gaining struggle—or a losing one. Rain squalls obscured their vision. They had only the wind to direct them.

"We'll make it!" Dot cried after two hours. "There's a lantern on the point. See!"

They had held up better than anyone had hoped for. But the wind increased as they got close to the eastern cliffs. The ship moved by inches. They could see men about the lantern. A terrific gust struck the *Lovely Lady*. Dot leaped to the end of the bridge.

"We'll never get in!" she cried. "The towing line is too long. Even if we hold up the bow, the stern will swing into the rocks on the south side of the entrance."

It was the first time Dot had abandoned hope, but every man on deck knew she was right. Only a powerful tug made fast alongside could negotiate that narrow place with the wind across the channel.

As if to make defeat certain, two gas boats ceased towing and drifted. "Out of gas," Joe cursed. Another boat quit. Stan stared helplessly. Victory had been so close.

Suddenly he leaped to the stairs.

"A line ashore!" he shouted. "The after winch! Get steam."

He was gone, shouting orders. Dot understood and called the engine room. They all understood. Joe Mason ran to get a hawser. Seamen sprang to boat davits. Heaving lines were bent together.

"Break an oar!" Stan shouted as the boat pulled away toward the lantern ashore.

A group of handloggers was gathered there and Stan's call brought them to the beach. A dozen pairs of strong arms hauled in the light line, then the hawser, and made it fast to a frost-riven sliver of granite. The searchlight was on them. When one flung up a hand, the after winch on the *Lovely Lady* began reeling in the hawser.

Stan did not wait to learn if his plan had been a success. The ship was swinging perilously close to the rocks but he ordered the men back into the boat and rowed out to the *Lady* once more.

"Another line from the bow to the float!" he yelled up to the bridge.

They ran it out and soon both winches were warping the ship in. After half an hour the *Lovely Lady* was fast to the float.

Up on the bridge, standing in the glare of the big searchlight, Dot Macaire was frankly weeping as she looked down upon the scene of confusion and rejoicing. She lifted a hand, and the crowd was silent.

"You're the most wonderful people in the world!" she cried, choking a little. "The *Lovely Lady* is yours—now and always. . . ."

STAN WILLIAMS was supervising the coiling of lines and getting things shipshape when Jeff Vail drew him aside.

"This is getting bad," he whispered. "Tom Gordon never lost a bearing in his life."

"It was barratry," Stan said harshly. "And now if someone gets a line aboard this disabled ship and tows her to port, he's entitled to salvage. It would break the Macaires."

"Leave that to me," said Vail.

Long after daylight, Jeff Vail knocked at Dot's cabin door and handed her a long sheet of paper on which were scrawled the names of many handloggers. The girl stared at

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it in wonder, and then, in the few lines at the top, she read that it was an agreement to abandon all claims of salvage.

"It's signed by every man who had a hand in it, even those ashore."

"But I couldn't accept such a thing!" the girl cried. "I can trust my friends."

"And you can trust the Empire to make trouble for you. The boys will do anything for you and the *Lovely Lady,* Dot, but among fifty men the Empire'd find a weak sister. How is their suit coming?"

"They can't win it!" she exclaimed passionately. "It would be unjust. The admiralty court will decide soon, and then we'll put in a counter claim."

"How's things below?"

"Two crankpin bearings went out. They'll be fixed by night. I'm going down to see how Tom is."

Tom Gordon had started work long before the handloggers began towing. The old chief was in a frenzy of rage and mortification, and his assistants felt his tongue constantly.

"Never before happened in a ship o' mine!" he repeated again and again.

The triple expansion engine, as beautiful a piece of work as ever came out of Scotland, was the altar at which Tom Gordon worshipped. He knew its every whim, its every whisper of sound.

"And right before my eyes!" he wailed.

The connecting rods had been taken out before the ship was safe at the float. Billy Tucker and Earl Smith, the first and second assistants, had removed the bearing caps. Smith hurried away for a tool in response to one of Tom Gordon's snarling commands. Billy Tucker, working swiftly, suddenly paused and rubbed thumb and forefinger together speculatively, dipped the finger into some oil and rubbed again.

"Don't be sittin' there!" Tom barked.

Billy reached out, grasped Tom's right hand and rubbed the finger on the palm. A look of horror came to Tom's eyes, and he, too, plunged a finger into the oil.

"Emery dust, chief!" Billy whispered in his ear.

"Quiet!" Tom commanded.

He jumped to the connecting rods, felt of the oil cups, found more abrasive. Billy Tucker was at his side and discovered that the holes from the cups to the bearings were plugged with bits of waste.

"Not a word!" the chief whispered to Billy. "If this could happen, we can't trust anybody."

A startling calm had descended on Tom Gordon. He rushed the work, but he no longer bellowed or found fault.

"Only the high pressure and intermediate cylinder pins," he whispered to Billy Tucker that afternoon. "Everything else is all right."

"But who could it a' been?" Billy demanded.

"No idea, but I'll find him and feed him to the boilers."

THE *Lovely Lady* departed after dark that night, tooted a farewell to her handlogger friends and went about her business of delivering mail, supplies, and passengers in Far Inlet.

Stan tried to see Tom Gordon alone but the chief was more irascible than ever and every time the second mate approached him, he snarlingly retreated.

The situation was now too serious for Stan to assume the entire responsibility. As Michael Craig had pointed out, the barrator had innumerable opportunities to damage the *Lovely Lady.* Dot must be told.

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Stan's first chance came the next evening when they stood watch together. The girl looked so small and defenseless there on the bridge where a man should have ruled.

And for the first time she dropped the habit of calling a mate "mister" and used the name Stan. It troubled him, for he knew it came from exhaustion of spirit.

"We've had all our bad luck," he exclaimed.

Dot smiled. "You've been like an old-timer on the *Lovely Lady*," she said. "And your thinking of getting a line ashore and using the winches—it's all that saved the ship."

"The handloggers did the trick," Stan said.

"To have such friends, people you can trust! I don't know what father and I would do without friends and without trust."

Stan had to tell her! He no longer had any excuse not to. They were leaning against the bridge rail. The sun was setting across the Gulf and the snowy peaks on Vancouver Island were crimson. It was a beautiful fall evening, the sky and tranquil water of the inland sea aflame, the *Lovely Lady* sliding silently through splendor.

Stan stole a glance at Dot, at the curl of brown hair about her ears, and suddenly he knew that for him all life was tied up with this ship and this girl.

"It is beautiful tonight," Dot said softly, and she turned to look at him. She could not miss the meaning of what she saw in his eyes.

For a moment they stood motionless, staring. The girl's lips parted. The cool aloofness with which she handled the ship in the night and storm slipped from her. Stan took a quick step forward.

"Dot!" Tom Gordon's excited voice sounded from the deck below. "I'll have a word with you."

The chief engineer came clattering up the stairs. Behind him was Joe Mason. With his first glimpse of their faces Stan knew they were about to tell Dot Macaire what he had intended to tell her. Footsteps at the other end of the bridge attracted his attention and he saw Billy Tucker and Earl Smith, the assistant engineers, coming through the wheelhouse. And then he heard a snarl and turned to confront a bit of savage ferocity in the person of Tom Gordon.

"You dirty bit of scum from the bottom of hell!" the chief shrieked. "Put emery dust in my bearings, eh?"

STAN was too astonished to speak, or even to jerk back from the fist that was clenched beneath his nose.

But Dot Macaire was not. She leaped forward, thrust Tom away. "What do you mean, coming onto the bridge with such charges against my mate?"

"But he did!" the chief screamed. "I've got the proof. He tried to wreck the ship. What do you know about him? Who is he? Emery dust! In my bearings! I'll feed him to the boilers."

"Stop it!" Dot commanded. "Is this true?" she asked of Stan.

"He's crazy!" Stan retorted. "I never—"

But the chief was beside himself with rage. He leaped to confront Stan, shrieking threats. Dot looked at Stan searchingly, then turned slowly and saw Joe Mason.

"Mister," she said, "what do you know about this?"

"He did it," the first mate answered harshly. "We found emery dust in his dunnage."

Stan Williams, suddenly enraged,

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leaped to confront the mate. But Billy Tucker and Earl Smith sprang between them and grasped his arms. Stan struggled furiously until Dot spoke.

"Let him go!" she commanded. "Mister, is this true?"

"It's not!" Stan answered as he looked into her eyes. "It's impossible. It's—"

"Dot, listen to what we know," the mate interrupted. "Let me ask him a few questions."

Something in Joe Mason's tone startled Dot. Her face became very pale.

"Get below, Tucker," the chief commanded. "It's your watch." Billy Tucker turned reluctantly, stopped, but a movement of Tom's head sent him on down the stairs.

"Williams," the mate began at once, "what relation are you to Captain Williams, who owned the Empire Steamship Company, and to Marvin Dawson, the present owner?"

Stan gasped. Right at the start he was to be discredited. He hesitated only for a moment. "Captain Williams was my father," he answered. "Dawson is my uncle. He robbed my father—"

"That's a good story to tell. How came you were at Alder's Landing that day?"

Stan glanced at Dot to find her watching him with wide eyes. "It was my idea to break into the shipping business in British Columbia," Stan answered. "I have a little money that Dawson didn't steal."

Stan made his answer short, for his mind was busy. Mike Craig knew the truth, and Jeff Vail, and neither was there to help him. Suddenly he was appalled by the utter defenselessness of his position.

"Dot," Joe Mason said harshly, "the chief and Billy Tucker discovered that emery dust had been put in the crank-pin bearings and the oil holes stopped up. That could only have been done when the engine was not running. It could not have been done before we reached Black Basin that night." Joe paused and pulled a double-ended spanner from a coat pocket. "We found this in his room, too," he continued. "One of Tom's pet tools with his mark on it."

"You idiots!" Stan exploded. "That had the guilty man's fingerprints on it. I was going to take it—"

"Don't let him fool you, Dot!" Tom Gordon warned her. "He was down in the engine room that night."

"Were you?" Dot asked.

"Yes," Stan answered. "I wanted Tom to help me. I was hit on the head and knocked off the ship that first night aboard. The steps were greased where Craig fell, and I found that wrench in the scuppers. That's what hit him. And Jeff Vail guessed something had been done to the bearings."

"And Vail and Craig are not here," Joe snorted. "Williams offered to work for nothing. Remember?"

"But Stan saved the ship that night we broke down!" Dot protested.

"And we found emery dust in his dunnage!" Tom Gordon shouted. "It's barratry. It's a prison offense. We can furnish the evidence. You make the complaint."

The girl recoiled against the rail. "Complaint!" she repeated. "You mean—"

"And I'll put him in irons now," Joe Mason added.

"No! No!" the girl cried.

She stared fearfully at Stan, at Joe Mason and at Tom Gordon. One hand grasped the rail, and the hand was white from pressure. "No!" she repeated. "I won't have it. I can't!"

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TOM GORDON leaped to confront her. "What!" he roared. "When we've got him! When we can prove it and send him to prison where he belongs! You crazy, girl? What's got into you. If the captain was—"

Dot Macaire straightened. Color rushed back to her face. "Get off the bridge!" she commanded coldly. "I'm master of this ship."

"But, Dot!" Joe Mason protested.

"Mister," she said slowly. "You are the first mate, and nothing else. Listen, all of you! Not a word of this to any of the crew. Williams will stay in his room until we're in dock. None of you go near him. The first man who disobeys my orders will leave the *Lovely Lady* and never step aboard again."

They had known her as a child and, all her skill and courage, they had never considered her anything else. Now it was not only the discipline of the sea that started them toward the steps. They realized for the first time that Dot Macaire was in command.

They departed. Stan was the last to go. He stopped and looked at her as she stood against the rail, straight, chin up, staring ahead into the gathering darkness, alone and aloof, as a captain of a ship must always be.

Later in the evening she came to the door of his room. "When we get in," she said shortly, "have your dunnage ready and jump to the pier as soon as we are close enough. I'm not in command ashore, and the crew—"

"Dot!" Stan cried. "You've got to believe—"

"Stow that!" she cut in savagely. "And get off this coast. Don't ever show up here again."

Once ashore, Stan went immediately to the hospital where the wounded Mike Craig had been taken. The mate alone, he knew, could clear him. Jeff Vail had been just guessing. But Michael Craig knew.

Stan reached the hospital an hour after Mike Craig died. He stood in the room, looking at the dead man, and suddenly knew how black was the evidence against him. Nothing could clear him now.

"His things are in that suitcase," the nurse said.

Stan was about to say that relatives would take them when he remembered why Mike had been killed. Mike had obtained evidence. Perhaps it was concrete, an object. Stan opened the case.

Clothes, letters, a book, ties, shirts, socks—Stan was about to close the bag when he felt some heavy substance. It was a small paper bag, soiled yet pliable. One glance told him it was emery dust. Stan slipped it back and went out.

Mike Craig had found it in the dunnage of some man aboard the *Lovely Lady;* his discovery of it had been known, and had brought his death. Some man in the crew—a weakling tempted by Dawson's money. The man had made repeated attempts to wreck the ship. He was free now to make sure of it.

Stan got a room in a hotel and sat down to think the thing through. The *Lovely Lady* would sail that night, probably for the last time. Somehow he had to see Dot, convince her of her danger.

Noon came and he had not found a way. It was late when he went out for lunch. And on the restaurant table he saw the *Lovely Lady's* name in the headlines of an afternoon paper. He snatched up the sheet, thinking only of physical disaster to the ship, and read that she had been libeled, her crew put ashore, and a representative of the admiralty court in sole possession.

The Empire's suit had gone against

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the Macaires. Twenty thousand dollars damages had been awarded and, in default of payment, the ship had been libeled.

This, Stan knew, was the end of the *Lovely Lady* and the Macaires in coast shipping. Not only were their dreams of more vessels shattered but they were to lose the one they had, to be penniless after years of effort.

Stan read the remainder of the news story. A reporter had seen Dot. "We're not through," she was quoted as saying. "I am chartering a gas boat. It will leave at midnight with the mail and what freight we can carry. We have a mail contract, and we are obligated to the people of Far Inlet. We are going to fulfill the contract and meet those obligations."

Stan found himself tremendously moved by this display of courage even while he knew how futile it was. With her father in a hospital, with her beloved *Lovely Lady* taken from her, with despair gripping her as it must be, Dot Macaire was carrying on. He remembered the girl as he had last seen her on the bridge, stunned by the charges against him, but chin up, staring into the darkness.

For a moment he sat there, clenching a crumpled newspaper. Then he leaped to the desk and asked for the telephone.

THE Macaires, he knew, made their home aboard the *Lovely Lady*. Ousted so suddenly, Dot would be compelled to go to a hotel. He called up several. Five minutes later he was thrusting his way through a crowded lobby.

"Miss Macaire's room?" he demanded of the clerk, then was bounding up the stairs, knocking at a door.

"What do you want?" Tom Gordon's irascible voice demanded, and Stan burst in.

Dot Macaire sprang from a seat on the bed, the chief engineer from the only chair. Sitting on the floor was Joe Mason, and the assistant engineer, Earl Smith.

Anger blazed in Dot's eyes, but before she could speak old Gordon was dancing in front of Stan.

"Delivered by the gods!" the chief cried shrilly. "We're down and out and licked. Mike Craig is dead. But we can get some satisfaction in makin' shark meat of this fellow."

He drew back a fist but Stan caught it in mid-air. "Will you give me thirty seconds?" he demanded of Dot.

"Why?" she retorted savagely. "Nothing matters now. Mike died this morning. The ship is lost."

"How much do you need to clear the *Lovely Lady?*"

"Clear it!" the chief shrieked. "After you—"

Stan continued to look at Dot. "Quick!" he exclaimed. "Before the banks and the admiralty offices close."

Still the girl did not speak. In desperation, Stan dropped Tom Gordon's wrist, shoved past Joe Mason and jerked a chair up to the table. Mason started for him, but stopped when he saw Stan open a check book and uncap a fountain pen.

"Get your hat and coat on, Dot," Stan said curtly. He was writing. The others stared. "Here!" Stan exclaimed as he tore out a check and handed it to Dot. "There'll be costs, too. But here's $25,362, every cent I have. Come on! Cash, and then the admiralty court."

He was helping Dot on with her coat.

"Call up Jimmie Russell," Stan said to the first mate. "Solicitor, Hastings

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Street. Tell him to get to the admiralty court at once and wait for me. The rest of you pack up your things. Dot's, too. We sail tonight, on schedule."

Ignoring the elevator, Stan ran down the stairs, pulling Dot with him. He fairly dragged her across the lobby and into a taxicab. They reached the bank just as the doors were closing.

"But, mister!" Dot cried in protest. "I won't—"

"Do as you're told, mister," and he grinned.

With the cash in Dot's handbag, they sped to the court building. Jimmie Russell was waiting.

"We want to release the *Lovely Lady,*" Stan explained. "Got cash for a bond. We'll appeal, and that's where you get your chance. Get busy."

Jimmie Russell knew exactly what to do. In ten minutes all three were on their way to the waterfront, and Dot still had three thousand dollars in her handbag.

"Now if you'll tell me—" she began.

"No time," Stan said. "Got to tell Jimmie things. He knows more maritime law than the judges. Who handled your case?"

"An old friend of father's."

"A clerk handled it," Jimmie said. "I happened to be in court part of the time and it was botched. That's not ethical, but there were enough errors to reopen that case."

"Thought so!" Stan exclaimed. "Jeff Vail told me there was a deliberate attempt to sink the *Lovely Lady.* Dot, fire that solicitor. By phone from the pier. And, Jimmie! Dawson has bought a man in our crew. He's tried to wreck the ship. He has killed one man. Get after Dawson here and we'll get what evidence we can. We're going to bust him."

THEY stopped at the pier. Joe Mason, Tom Gordon and Earl Smith were waiting with their dunnage. An officer from the admiralty court appeared and the *Lovely Lady* was soon in its owner's hands. Earl Smith, on orders from Dot, started to round up the crew. Dot telephoned her father's solicitor and Jimmie Russell took over the case.

Stan gathered Joe, Tom and Dot in her cabin.

"There are facts which you all should know before we sail," he said. "You had a clear case against me. Still have. I showed my faith by putting up every cent I own, all that Dawson did not steal from me and my father. That should entitle me to a hearing."

He told his story quietly, but with careful attention to each detail. "Mike was murdered," he concluded. "At the hospital this morning I found a small bag of emery dust in his dunnage. He was killed by the barrator to avoid exposure. The wrench in the scuppers proves it. You can find the emery dust in Stevens' suitcase. In his room now you'll probably find that shackle."

"I'll take a look," Tom Gordon said.

He was back quickly with the broken pieces. "Found it in Mike's room, just like you said. If he had the emery dust he probably knew who planned to use it."

"And he was killed defending the *Lovely Lady,*" Dot added in a whisper. Her face was white. Not until then had she fully realized the ruthlessness of the traitor.

"And the fellow is still aboard," Joe growled. "If what Williams tells us—"

"There's no need to doubt Stan," Dot interrupted sharply. "He's shown his loyalty. Now it's up to the four of us—"

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A KNOCK at the door stopped her. Joe opened it to admit Wallace Putnam, general manager of the proposed paper mill in Far Inlet. He looked uncertainly at the group which faced him. "Just heard you got your ship back, Dot," he said. I know you're busy but I felt I ought to see you before you sailed. How is your father?"

"Better, thank you," Dot replied. "He's still in the hospital."

"I was sorry to hear about his accident." He stopped a moment and added uneasily, "I would have preferred to talk to him about this matter."

His tone was kindly but there was in it a note of finality that announced disaster. Stan glanced in pity at Dot. She was standing, head up, gaze level, lips firm. After a moment she said quietly:

"I would rather get bad news than have him hear it."

"I am afraid it is bad news, my dear," Putnam said reluctantly. "The directors held a meeting. They decided to rush operations and they felt they must be certain of the service in Far Inlet. The Empire people, with more ships, have demonstrated that they can keep schedule. With you—breakdowns, delays, losing that suit. It's too precarious."

"Doesn't our past record mean anything to you?" Dot demanded. "You believed once we could handle your business. Every disaster you have mentioned has been the result of treachery. A man in our own crew has been bought by Empire money. He has tried to wreck us. Our first mate is dead as a result of his work. You know Dawson is desperate, over-extended financially. Do you think a company which fights with such weapons will give you service on which you can depend?"

"Can you prove that barratry charge, Dot?"

"Not in court today. But I will. Give us two weeks' time. We've paid fifty thousand, all we had, on a new ship, because you let us believe we would get the contract. You can't throw us over like this."

Dot was on her feet now, arguing like a barrister. Stan watched her with admiration. Something of her fire must have touched Wallace Putnam.

"Dot, I've known you and your father for many years," he said slowly. "I've never doubted your word. But physically, of your equipment and financial capacity my company must make sure. I'll have them delay decision two weeks until you can prove this barratry matter."

The four were silent when he had gone.

"I can't think of anything more that could happen to us," Tom Gordon said. "Wonder if enough men are aboard to get up steam."

"Listen, chief," Stan said. "This delayed decision will make Dawson desperate. He'll throw off all wraps now. We've got two weeks to stop him, to get the Putnam contract and to find that traitor. Better look in the engine room."

"You're crazy!" Tom yelled. "I'd trust any o' my boys."

"Get that idea out of your head," Dot said sharply. "We four know this, and your two assistants know a little. No one else. I'd as quickly accuse one man as another. But one is a traitor. We can't take chances. We four must keep watch. If we don't, we lose the ship."

"But Earl Smith is my cousin's boy, aboard for ten years," Tom protested. "And Billy Tucker is the one who found the emery powder."

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"And it might be either of them!" Dot retorted. "Steam up, please, for the winches. Mister, you'll start loading. I'll talk to Mr. Williams a moment."

When they were alone, she held out her hand to Stan. "I'm sorry for believing that charge against you."

"I don't blame you!" Stan exclaimed. "It looked like a clear case. I was floored completely. Only, Dot, I was never a traitor to the *Lovely Lady* or to you."

"I know it now. I think I knew it all the time. And now this loan—I can never thank you."

"Don't. It was just that I couldn't stand to see you beaten. I couldn't bear the thought of losing the *Lovely Lady*."

He had leaned forward, had laid his hand on one of Dot's, and she did not take it away. As on that evening on the bridge, these two suddenly forgot ships and treachery. They were young. They had been thrown together in a turmoil of excitement and danger.

"You've been splendid," the girl whispered. "I'm so grateful and so ashamed. But Stan! With father hurt! With all he's dreamed of now in the balance! Don't you see? I'm skipper of the *Lovely Lady*. I've got to make Putnam believe we can deliver. There's fog, and worry, chance of a slip-up, and a man aboard in Dawson's pay. I can't think of anything else. I must not. This —this other—it doesn't mix with navigation. I don't want it that way. You understand—mister."

The last was a plea, not in her curt bridge manner, not a reminder that he was only the second mate. Stan understood, pressed her hand and stood up.

"I understand—sir." He smiled, and saluted. "But we're going to lick this thing, Dot. Somehow. We'll get the wrecker, and Dawson. We've got to."

IV

THE crew drifted back in answer to messages and phone calls. All except Billy Tucker. His family reported that he had come home, left his things, and gone downtown. The ship was almost ready to sail when he appeared in a taxi and with much dunnage.

"Girl, eh?" Tom Gordon growled. "This ship's your girl, man, and don't forget it. Below with you."

Fog delayed them all the way up the coast. Their navigation would have scandalized, and mystified, a deep sea master. They tooted constantly, not to warn others but to learn their own positions by echoes. Time and again, Dot astonished Stan with her seamanship. She knew the quality of an echo, whether it came from a timbered mountainside or a wall of rock.

Their friends helped, pounding empty gasoline barrels to lead the *Lovely Lady* to a float or climbing to rocky points and beating a tomtom on a dishpan as a warning.

"That's Mollie Addington," Dot would say. "And I completely forgot the sewing silk she asked for. Pale pink. Steady as she is. Nor'east by east."

The girl could scarcely keep her eyes open, but she stubbornly clung to the rule of the sea that the master should be on the bridge in thick weather. Sometimes for an hour, when the channel was wide and clear, she slept in a deck chair in the wheel house.

And the fog, Stan knew, took too much of their time and thought. Always one or two mates must be on the bridge. Only Tom Gordon, prowling alone in the depths of the ship, could be on watch.

"I can't do it alone," Tom complained to Dot. "I've got to eat and sometimes sleep. It'd take only thirty

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seconds to wreck this ship. No reason why I can't ask my cousin's boy to help me. Or Billy Tucker."

"And it might be either of them," Dot said gently. "Don't you see, you old bear?" She smoothed back a gray lock on his forehead and smiled.

"Get away, you wench!" he growled. "I want no skipper makin' eyes at me."

She kissed him, for she knew that was what he expected, and he went back to prowl alone in the heart of the ship.

It was a relief when Captain Macaire came aboard. They stopped at Cal's Cove and he insisted on accompanying them. In the hour's run up the inlet to Black Basin the *Lovely Lady's* owner, in his room aft the bridge, was told all that had happened.

"I've often wished I had a son," was the captain's comment at the end. "Now I know I have one, Dot. No man could have done better than you."

"But I haven't found this fellow!" the girl cried. "And I can't bear the thought of it. One of our men! They're our family!"

"A bad plank will get into the best built ships," her father said in his gentle voice. "But it always shows up. It gives way in a storm, and we find it."

"Meanwhile it can sink the ship," the girl said bitterly.

"Not when you know it's there."

CAPTAIN MACAIRE had listened to the story of disaster without flinching and without anger. Weak as he was, he still managed to give the rest of them a sense of strength and security.

"Dot told me how the old man took it," Joe Mason said to Stan. "If they hadn't put him in a hospital, a lot of this stuff might never have happened."

"But his being here isn't going to stop things now!" Stan protested. "Dawson is desperate. His man is still aboard, and I'll gamble he has orders not to let this ship get back to Vancouver. Have you found out anyhing?"

"No," Joe admitted. "I've prowled when I could, and I've watched the movements of every man. I've tried eliminating those I was sure of, and I don't get anywhere."

"He's in the black gang," Stan said. "All the evidence points to that. There are six oilers and firemen down there, and two assistants. It's one of them, unless it's old Tom Gordon himself."

"I'd sooner say it was me!" the mate retorted angrily.

"That's bad navigating in this weather," Stan said. "But take the other eight. What do you know about the firemen and oilers?"

Joe told what he had learned of each through the many years, and in the last few days.

"Now the assistants," Stan said. "Smith likes a bender occasionally, doesn't he?"

"He's never missed a trip, though he's quite regular at the bottle," Joe admitted. "I don't know much of him ashore, except that he's a kin of Tom's."

"And Billy Tucker nearly missed this trip," Stan said. "Dresses pretty well. His room's fitted out—girls' pictures and all that."

"You been in it?"

"I've been through his dunnage. I've been through Tom's log, trying to check on which men were on or off watch when things happened. And I've come to the conclusion it's Smith or Tucker."

"Better not tell Tom that," Joe advised. "He'll only get mad. We've got to watch the black gang."

"Fine chance in this fog with three of us on the bridge most of the time."

It was only when they were alone

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that they dared show how the constantly increasing dread of the traitor was telling on them. For, like the impenetrable fog itself, a sense of defeat and failure clung to the *Lovely Lady*. Every member of the crew felt it. The officers seldom smiled. But from the deck they looked up at the slight, dim figure on the bridge and cursed softly to express their tenderness.

Time after time the ship was guided, miraculously it seemed, into narrow holes where a few people awaited mail and supplies. She lost time, fell further behind schedule, crawled through the thick gray blanket, spent valuable hours moored to floats to wait for the fog to lift. But on this Dot was adamant.

"I won't risk the ship even to keep schedule!" she exclaimed to Stan. "Dawson can drive his captains if he wishes. It's easy to navigate this coast when you're in a Vancouver office building. He'll lose the *Hernando* with Whelan slamming her through the way he does."

"That would help with Putnam."

"I don't want to win that way," Dot insisted. "I'd hate to see even a Dawson ship pile up. Besides, it is what we do that wins the contract. The bank has faith in us. They'll advance the remainder of the purchase price on the new ship with the contract as security. With two ships there will be no doubt of our ability to fulfill the terms. But we've got to get the contract to justify another ship."

"And we've got to save this one," Stan said. "Watch that compass and the man at the wheel. A bit of steel slipped into the binnacle, or in the quartermaster's clothes, and we'll hit the beach."

"I do," the girl said. "The men are beginning to think I'm queer. And I am! I can't stand much more of this suspense. If I were only like father. Wasn't he wonderful when we told him? So cool and gentle. And what he said about the bad plank showing up in a storm. But don't think he's soft."

"I think I am," Stan said harshly. "Days have gone by. I've talked to every man. I've spied on them. And I'm just where I started."

V

SLOWLY the *Lovely Lady* poked into holes along that twisted coastline, feeling her way in the fog, dropping farther behind schedule. Nerves would have been tight enough from that alone. But with Tom Gordon growling and prowling ceaselessly about his engine room, with the two mates wandering always through the ship, watching and questioning, tension became terrific. Men snarled at each other. The happy family spirit was gone.

Tom Gordon scarcely slept. Joe Mason and Stan rarely lay down when off watch. Dot was on the bridge almost constantly. The ship became a powder keg, her hull crammed with suspicion, weariness, bad temper and fear.

She reached Black Basin in Far Inlet with fog still thick and the ebb tide gathering force in the narrows.

"We'll lie here four hours," Dot announced. "I would not risk the current in this pea soup even if there were no insurance rules. Everyone can turn in."

The girl was exhausted. The crew trooped into the fo'c's'le. Joe Mason went to his cabin. Stan struggled against leaden eyelids. It was at Black Basin that the bearings of the engine had been ruined.

He roamed about, pretending to inspect mooring lines, looking after the interminable tasks aboard ship. What he really did was check on everyone. He

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knew Dot had gone to her cabin, that the mate was asleep, that each bunk in the fo'c's'le held a snoring man. Only Earl Smith was on watch in the engine room. The galley was empty.

Stan carefully opened the door of Billy Tucker's cabin and found the second assistant sound asleep. Even old Tom Gordon had given in at last. The chief stumbled down the alleyway below deck to his cabin forward of Billy's.

"I can trust Earl," he said to Stan. "I'm turnin' in."

Anxiety as well as lack of sleep had worn Tom down. He did not have the energy to be grouchy. When he had shut his door, Stan went on deck. He had the ship to himself now. Every man was accounted for. The only one who was awake was Earl Smith. Stan made a last round of the deck and then went down into Tom Gordon's domain. Earl was reading a magazine.

"Afraid I'll use some emery dust?" he asked in a surly tone. "You needn't do any snooping while I'm here."

"I came down to ask what you know," Stan said quickly.

"Nothing, except I'll go nuts unless the chief gets off the prod."

"You know the oilers and firemen better than we do topside. Any weak sisters?"

"Maybe. But use your head. This fellow hasn't hit twice in the same place yet. It won't be here next time."

Earl arose and went to a locker. A cardboard box held a bottle.

Earl took a drink and returned to his magazine. Stan made a round of the ship and then crept back to the fiddley. Through the grating he could see Earl's feet. He was still in the chair.

Another round through the quiet ship. At the end of it Earl's feet were still in sight. Stan wanted to sit down, sleep, but he drove himself to further prowling. And when he opened the door to the alleyway below decks aft, smoke rolled out and sucked past him.

STAN did not sound an alarm. Too many thoughts were racing through his mind. The barrator had struck again, this time with fire. And rooms down that alleyway held men sodden with sleep. Stan dashed in through the smoke and turned the first door knob.

Smoke billowed out. Flames leaped in a corner. A groping hand felt Tom Gordon, still in his bunk. Stan was almost suffocated before he had dragged the old man out. He hauled the chief to fresh air, left him.

The door beyond was Billy Tucker's. He, too, was asleep, though his room was thick with smoke. Stan shook him awake and ran across the hallway. He routed out Joe Mason, sent him on deck to call the crew.

Stan turned back to Tom Gordon's room, and met Billy Tucker running down the alleyway.

"Come along!" Stan commanded as he grasped Billy's shirt. "Maybe we can get this out before it spreads."

Flames were leaping high in Tom's room now, licking up the after bulkhead behind the bunks. The mattress of the lower bed was burning.

But what caught Stan's attention was a number of gallon cans beneath the berth. A current of inrushing air carried smoke upward and Stan saw labels of a lubricating company.

"Let's get out!" Billy Tucker yelled. "Those samples of oil will explode."

"We'll get that oil out!" Stan growled. "This fire isn't bad, but it will be if that oil catches."

He forced Billy down and together they crawled forward beneath the

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smoke and flames. Stan reached one can, gave it to Billy, got another. Then the heat drove them back.

They retreated into the alleyway. Billy darted toward the door.

"You damned rat!" Stan exclaimed. "Come back here and finish the job."

Billy tried to jerk free when caught. Then the forward door opened and a nozzle and hose were thrust in. Stan grabbed them from Joe Mason.

"Get the water to us!" he yelled.

Stan gave the nozzle to Billy and shoved him ahead, dragging the hose behind him. He pushed Billy into Tom's room.

The heat was intense now. Smoke was drawn out a ventilator in the corner. As they entered, one of the oil cans burst open and flames roared up.

Billy dropped the nozzle to flee. When Stan blocked the door he began beating at the mate's face and chest.

"Get out!" he yelled. "We can't stay here! We'll be—"

"Get hold of yourself!" Stan commanded harshly. "Somebody's got to get this fire out."

He hurled Billy back, but the engineer would not pick up the nozzle. Then water came, and the hose started to thresh. Stan got it under control, as Billy tried to crawl out between his legs.

"You yellow cur!" Stan snarled. "You'll stay now if you fry. I didn't think a man in the crew would—"

He broke off. He was holding the hose, and holding Billy Tucker, and in that moment of stress he had remembered Captain Macaire's comment, "A bad plank will show up in a storm."

THE oil was burning fiercely now. Flames roared toward the ventilator. Smoke was sucked out of the room, and Stan could see the other's face plainly. And never had he seen such terror.

Insane fear drove Billy to a new desperate attempt to escape, but Stan, a far bigger and stronger man, hurled him back.

"We'll be blown to hell!" Billy shrieked, and his eyes turned toward the ventilator. "When the fire gets to it!"

Stan swept the hose across the flames. He thought his face was cracking from the heat. His eyes burned as from an acid bath. But his thoughts were racing to other things.

"Fire gets to what?" he demanded. "You cache something in the ventilator?"

One ventilator served both Tom's and Billy's rooms, with a boxlike enclosure lying along a heavy steel stanchion between. Its openings were covered with wire mesh.

"It'll blow us to hell!" Billy screamed.

"Let it!" Stan snarled. "I'll gamble, and you will, too. . . . So you're the rat aboard the *Lovely Lady!*"

Billy Tucker heard him but didn't answer. He was watching the flames being sucked toward the ventilator. Suddenly, in a last desperate effort, he lunged at Stan, kicking and striking, trying to dodge past.

Stan settled him by the simple expedient of knocking him down with the stream of water. He drove Billy into a corner, kept him there, meanwhile switching the stream back to the flames and into the ventilator. Every time Billy tried to get up, the water knocked him down.

Joe Mason came to the door and called.

"We're all right!" Stan answered. "Keep the water coming."

He soon had the flames beaten back.

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Water sloshed around the floor. Smoke was not drawn out with the lessened draft and the room began to get dark and thick. Stan got down low, reached for Billy.

"Was it dynamite?" he yelled against the noise of the water. "You cache it there? Going to blow up the ship, eh? So you're the one that tried to kill me. You *did* kill Mick Craig. Put emery in the bearings. What did Dawson pay you?"

"You can't fasten that on me!"

Stan wondered if he could. Dynamite in the ventilator was not direct proof. And the fire had started in Tom Gordon's room, a room with a common ventilator.

"All right," Stan said. "If there's no dynamite there, nothing'll happen to you here. I'll lock you in."

"That'd be murder!" Billy protested frantically. "Keep the water on that ventilator, for God's sake!"

Stan turned his attention to the fire. In thirty seconds he had it out. The room was dense with smoke now and both men were choking. Stan got a port open and thrust the nozzle out. He opened the door and the room partly cleared.

"Come along," he said to Billy. "We can go on deck."

Joe Mason was in the alleyway with several of the crew. All left when they heard the fire was out, for smoke was still thick.

ON deck Stan and Billy walked into a crowd of officers and men. In a moment the entire crew had gathered about them. Tom Gordon was there, face and hands bandaged. Dot ran forward when she saw Stan's blackened face and singed clothing.

"You saved the ship again!" she cried. "But it wasn't—" She lowered her voice. "Not what you think. Tom went to bed with his pipe in his mouth and set fire to his bedding."

"I thought it was that," Stan said. "And Captain, will you put this man in irons?"

He held Billy by the collar. "It's a lie!" Billy shouted. He struck at Stan.

"Please get the irons, mister," Stan said to Joe. "Captain, can't we take this man to your father's room? He tried to run away below. I had to hold him to his job. Your father said something about a bad plank showing up in a storm."

Dot had been bewildered until that moment. She looked at Stan an instant, then waved the crew away. "Yes," she said. "Bring him."

The fog cleared that afternoon and the *Lovely Lady* caught slack in the narrows and proceeded on her way. Stan had the eight to twelve watch but he was alone on the bridge until the sun set behind the peaks and black darkness began to well up from the bottom of the deep canyon in which the sea lay. Then Dot Macaire joined him.

For five minutes she was the ship's master, silent, watchful, checking her position, glancing at the compass, issuing a curt order. At last she joined Stan in the darkness at the starboard end of the flying bridge.

"I think that was a complete job, down in father's room," she said. "The confession covers every important point. Perhaps not enough to convict Dawson in court, but it will damn him in the shipping business, and it will convince Putnam. He can't refuse now to give us the contract. Only one thing worries me now. The dynamite. It makes me shiver to think about it. Do you think we got it all?"

"Billy says he only brought eight sticks aboard," Stan answered. "It

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would have been plenty. We found four in the ventilator, and he had already sneaked four into the engine room and hidden them behind the starboard boiler. He was badly broken, and I don't think he lied about it."

"I'm glad you found that girl's letter in his room," Dot said. "It is corroborative. I wonder if she really intended going away with him or just wanted the money. 'Your last trip in that old scow.' I'd like to wring her neck. 'Old scow'!"

"Girls do cause a lot of trouble."

Dot laughed, but quickly she became serious.

"Oh, Stan! When I think how close we came to losing the *Lovely Lady!* And it was you who saved her. Somehow she means more to me than even the new ship or Putnam and his contract."

They drew together. For a moment they forgot Dawson and his treachery, even the financial reward for which they had struggled. They were children of the sea, those two. They had saved a fine ship; they had cheated the ocean, the fog and those who threatened her.

Life ashore offers nothing to compare. Steel and concrete anchored to unshakable rock, the straight lines of paved streets, the solidity of the earth itself, these give security and certainty —and monotony.

The stress and danger and uncertainty were past. It was the moment for which Stan had waited. "There's one thing I want to ask of you and your father," he began. "When you get the new ship I want a place on the *Lovely Lady.*"

"But Stan! Of course! If anyone ever earned—"

"Not on those grounds."

"What do you mean?"

"I want to marry into it. You and I together on her."

Dot's warm laugh sounded beside him in the darkness. "You always choose the strangest times and places."

But she drew closer, and if the quartermaster had happened to look out the wheelhouse door he would have seen a most unusual sight—the master of the ship in the arms of the second mate.

THE END

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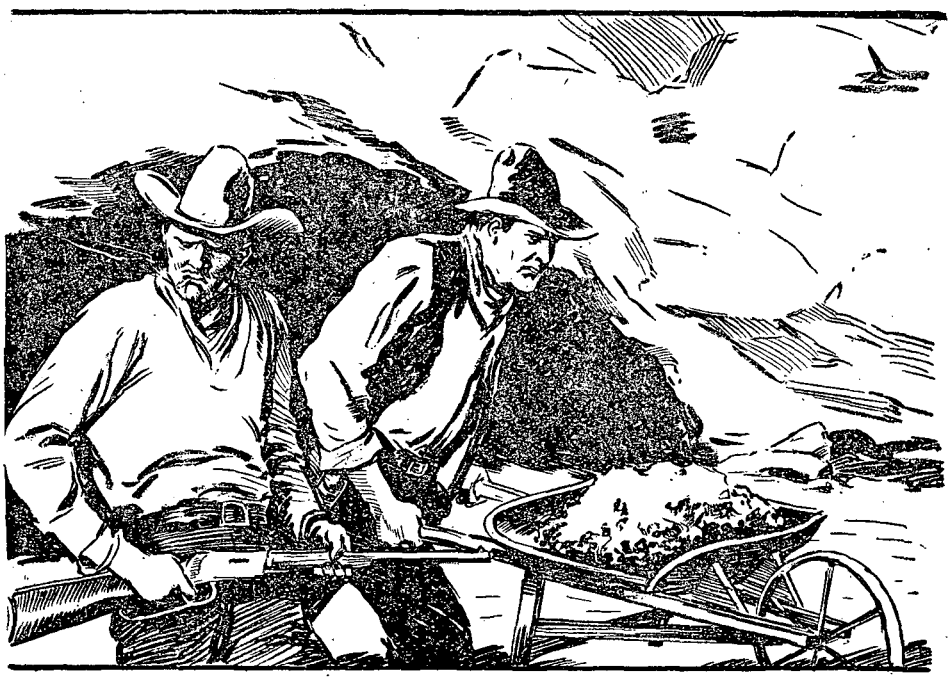

Galloping Gold

BY W. C. TUTTLE

Author of the "Dogieville" and "Henry" Stories

CHAPTER I

OUTLAWS ALL

"ROARIN' BILL" ROSE sprawled in a home-made rocker, his booted feet elevated to the top of a crude table, on which was an oil lamp, numerous and sundry ancient magazines, old newspapers, scattered playing cards, and a half-filled bottle of whisky.

Roarin' Bill's shirt-collar was hiked up around his ears, his chin sunk down inside the collar. One hand, dangling over the arm of the chair, held a letter, the envelope of which rested on Bill's lap. Bill was tall and gaunt, as hard as the Arizona hills which surrounded his Lazy R ranch house. His face was deeply lined, his hair grizzled. Taken as a whole, Roarin' Bill was a typical old Arizona rawhider. Because of the fact that he seldom raised his voice they called him "Roarin'."

The main room of the Lazy R was furnished with home-made stuff, very serviceable, but not beautiful. Midway of the room, seated at a card table, were "Thunder" and "Lightnin'" Mendoza, Roarin' Bill's hired hands. More Yaqui Indian than Mexican, they suited Roarin' Bill.

"I like 'em," Bill had said; "'cause they ain't got brains enough to tell what they shouldn't tell—even if they was smart enough to know anything."

Just now Thunder and Lightnin' were absorbed in a game of their own. With

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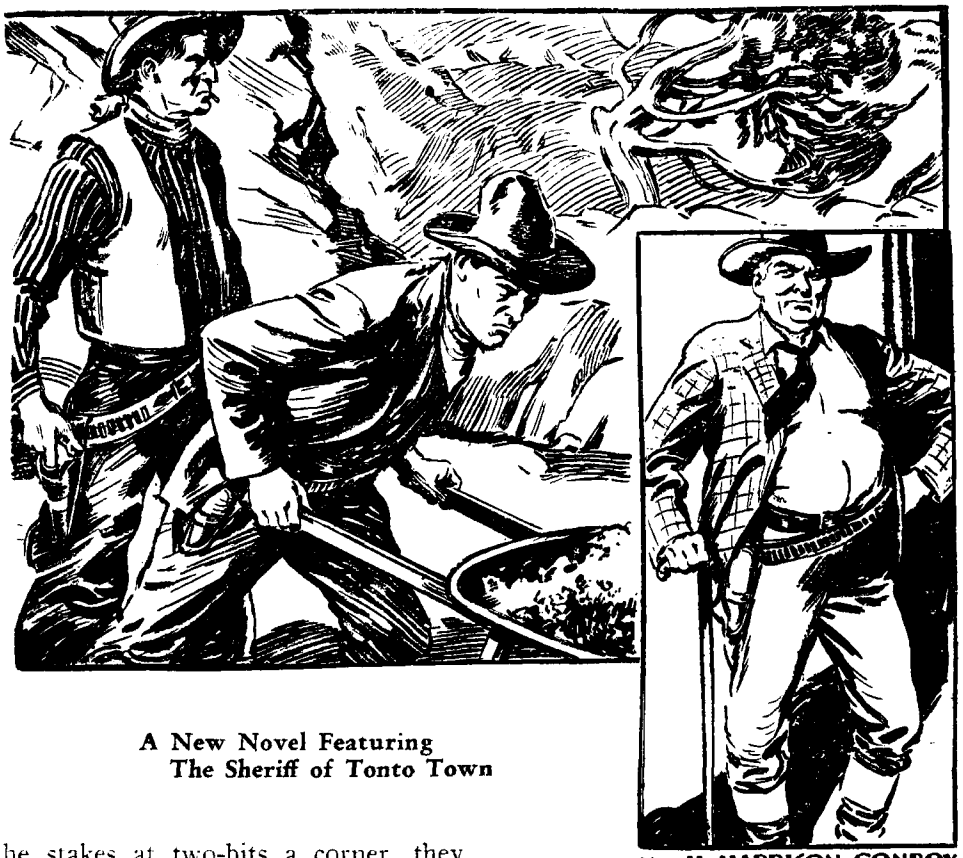

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MR. H. HARRISON CONROY

the stakes at two-bits a corner, they eagerly watched a pair of Mexican jumping-beans in the center of a penciled circle on a piece of paper. A larger circle indicated the finish line. When the winner's bean managed to edge over the outer circle, another stake was put up, and the two beans replaced in the starting circle.

"How yuh comin', Lightnin'?" asked Roarin' Bill.

Lightnin' turned his head for a moment—and in that time, in some unaccountable way, Thunder's bean was balancing precariously on the finish line. After a jerk or two it went rolling back to the center, where it collided gently with Lightnin's entry.

"Sometheeng ees wrong," declared Lightnin'. "Every time I'm turn your head away, theese damn bean from Thunder ees go like strick. I'm lose feety centavos, biccause I'm not keep your eye open."

"W'at ees a strick?" queried Thunder.

"W'at you theenk?" asked Lightnin'. "You theenk I'm pay you feefty centavos and also learn you w'at ees a strick? *Por Dios,* I'm theenk my bean got rheumateesm."

"Did yuh see Ab Morgan in Tonto City?" asked Roarin' Bill.

"Sure," nodded Lightnin', keeping his eyes on the two beans. "He ees there weeth hees *hija.*"

"She ain't his daughter — she's his step-daughter."

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"Huh?"

"Step-daughter. She's the daughter of his wife. I mean—the wife he had, before she died."

Lightnin' scratched his head violently for several moments.

"You mean, hees step on her, when she was leetle?"

"I don't reckon we'll go into that," said Roarin' Bill. "Jist go ahead and play with them worm-infested beans. Watchin' a jumpin'-bean roll six inches won't tax yore brains—much."

"Lightnin' ees ver' dumb," declared Thunder, fondling the six hairs which comprised his mustache. "W'en a man ees married, biffore hees wife died—*cuidado!* Ha, ha, you pay men twenty-five centavos!"

"Madre de Dios!" snorted Lightnin'. "I light one cigareet—lose twenty-five centavos! I queet. Seex-beets, eh? I'm geeve you payday."

"You geeve me now," demanded Thunder. "I'm play for cash—only."

"Eef *you* lose—how the hell you pay me? You got notheeng."

Thunder shrugged his shoulders. "Ver' true—I'm got notheeng. But I'm—well, I'm not ask for *oro Americano*. Ver' likely I'm be satisfy weeth necktie, mebbe some pair socks."

"Madre de Dios! So? You look een my war-sack, eh? You see those rad necktie and those green sock, eh? Leesten to me, you pock-picket—"

"Sh-h-h-h!" warned Roarin' Bill. At the sound he heard, his right hand silpped down beside him, gripping a heavy Colt .45. Quietly, he cocked it.

"Somebody outside," he said.

A MOMENT later, two quick knocks sounded on the door. They were followed after a short interval by two more. Bill relaxed in his chair again.

"C'mon in, boys," he said.

The door swung open. Four rough-looking men filed in, closing and fastening it behind them. They were "Pecos Charley" Peters, "Sody" Slade, Ed Clovis and Zibe Tucker—as tough a quartette as ever came out of New Mexico with a posse on their heels.

They strode over without a word and helped themselves from Roarin' Bill's bottle. Tonto Valley did not know this bearded quartette, dressed in worn and faded clothes, although they had been holed-up at the Lazy R for more than two months.

Pecos Charley was a skinny little person, bow-legged, large-nosed, with a nervous Adam's-apple. Sody Slade was huge, clumsy, big-fisted. Clovis was of medium height, dark, narrow-eyed, always alert. Zibe Tucker was short and fat, good-natured until riled, and inclined to be a peacemaker.

"Well, Bill, we got it all moved," announced Pecos Charley after a stiff drink. "We shot a small blast fifty feet back in the second tunnel, and shook down enough stuff to keep anybody from gettin' inside. We can clean it out in a week."

"Did yuh dig it all out?" asked Roarin' Bill.

"Every ounce," declared Pecos Charley. "It was a pocket—like I said it was. But—" Pecos shoved his thumbs inside his belt and expanded his chest—"it'll run close to seventy-five thousand dollars."

"I wish I had my split of it right now," put in Clovis. "I dunno how we've kept out of sight this long."

"It ain't seemed long," mused Sody Slade. "That's 'cause we've all been busy, I reckon."

Roarin' Bill went to the kitchen and brought back tin cups and another bottle of whisky. Filling the cups and passing them around, he said:

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"Well, here's hopin' our luck don't ravel out, gents."

They drank deeply, thoughtfully.

"Luck is shore a funny thing," said Roarin' Bill. "I drifted in here eight years ago, with a bundle of money and with a past that was full of black spots as a leopard's hide. This cattle outfit was spindlin' when I bought it. Shucks, the law must have knowed I was here. I never changed my name. I was right here—if they wanted me.

"But I was aimin' to go straight. I never slick-eared one damn calf in Tonto Valley; I paid my debts and acted like a white man. Mebbe that's why they let me alone—I dunno. But I never had any luck — outside of not goin' to the pen. Blizzards, drought, lobo wolves—they all took a whack at the Lazy R. And worst of all — Ab Morgan and his damn Quarter-Circle M outfit moved in right beside me. For six years he's handed me the hot end of the runnin'-iron. It's hell, I'll tell yuh."

"And then we had to come along," added Sody Slade. "We didn't help yuh none, Bill."

"You jist forget that, Sody," said Roarin' Bill quickly. "I ain't forgettin' that the law was hot on my trail—oncet. But it's shore funny the way it worked out. Hidin' you fellers in that old Comanche mine on Morgan's property, and you accident'ly stumblin' onto that vein of gold that everybody had overlooked."

"It's all in yore old abandoned Two-Gun tunnel now, Bill," said Pecos Charley. "It was a back-breakin' job, but we moved it over there."

Roarin' Bill nodded and poured more liquor.

"I been figurin' that as soon as possible, I'll reopen my old mine," he said. "I can say then that you four fellers are miners that I hired in Scorpion Bend. Then we can clean out that tunnel, sack up that ore and ship it out. We'll git the money, split it five ways, work a few more days and say it was only a pocket."

"That's fine," agreed Pecos Charley. "All I want is my split of the money, and then I'm goin' to California and start all over again — on the square."

"I like to hear yuh say that, Pecos," said Roarin' Bill. "I've been square for eight years. It's the only life, I'll tell yuh that. Well, you fellers have had a taste of it for two months. The feller who said that honesty is the best policy shore said somethin'."

"I'm jist wonderin' what Ab Morgan would say about it," mused Zibe Tucker. "You forgot about that ore, didn't yuh, Bill?"

"Well, I—huh! Yeah, I did—kinda, Zibe. But I don't figure it's stealin' to take somethin' from a feller that he never knowed he had. Anyway, I've been gettin' the worst of it from Morgan for six years; so that gold ore sorta evens us up—a little. Listen to this:"

Roarin' Bill opened out the letter he had been holding and held it nearer the light.

"This was in the postoffice at Tonto City today," he said "It says: *'I fenced the water at Outlaw Springs, and you tore down the fence. I claim that water and I aim to keep it. I'm fencin' it again, and if you tear down that fence again I'll fill you so full of holes that the woodpeckers will use yore carcass to store their winter supply of acorns. Yours truly, Ab Morgan.'*"

"WELL, shucks," drawled Sody Slade. "Let's all ride down there and give the woodpeckers first chance at Ab Morgan."

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Roarin' Bill shook his head. "You keep away from Ab Morgan," he ordered. "Everybody in the Valley knows how things are between me and Morgan. If you killed Morgan, they'd hang me—unless they caught you at it. If Morgan kills me, they'll say it's jist too bad—and do nothin' to Ab Morgan."

"Is that the kinda law you got around here, Roarin'?"

"No, it ain't. But Morgan is supposed to be a law-abidin' ciitzen. I'm Roarin' Bill Rose, ex-outlaw. That's why nothin' will be done to Ab Morgan, in case he guns me down. We've got the dum-dingedest sheriff you ever seen, boys. He's short and fat, with a face like a moon, and a nose—well, it's the biggest one I've ever seen. Kinda like a potato, and red as hell. He's funny, I tell yuh. Before he came here, he was an actor. Never seen a cow until he inherited the JHC Ranch, over near Tonto City. But he ain't no fool, even if he does look and act like one.

"He's got Judge Van Treece for a deputy. He's taller than Sody, and looks like a bloodhound that lost the scent. And the jailer is Oscar Johson, the dumbest Swede in North America—and the strongest. Takes a horseshoe twists it in two, without even makin' up a face. But don't never make the mistake of thinkin' any of them three are dumb — except Oscar Johnson. He'll qualify.

"No, I don't reckon there's a crooked thought in all three of 'em—but naturally they'd favor Ab Morgan."

"How soon do yuh reckon you can start yore mine to workin'?" asked Pecos Charley. "I'd shore like to cash in on that ore."

"Well, I'll tell yuh," replied Roarin' Bill. "Next time I go to Scorpion Bend, I'll take a sample along for an assay. Ira Hallam, the assayer, is a danged old woman, with a hinged tongue. He'll tell the world that I've struck it rich. That'll alibi us for havin' a lot of shippin' ore real soon.

"In the meantime you fellers keep under cover. You can load up on stuff to take back to the tunnel now; it's there in the kitchen. And there's a quarter of fresh beef in the shed I brought plenty tobacco, too! so yuh won't have to worry about that. Reckon I've got enough to keep yuh eatin' for a week or ten days. By that time, I'll have the assay made, and be fixin' to stock up on drill steel and picks."

"That shore sounds good to me," grinned Sody Slade. "Take care of yourself, Bill; we need yuh." He moved toward the door. "C'mon, fellers, let's pack the grub back to the rustler's tomb. See yuh later, Bill."

"Why not take that assay to Scorpion Bend in the mornin'?" suggested Pecos Charley.

"I've got a job to do in the mornin'," replied Roarin' Bill.

"What's that, Bill?"

"Why—tearin' down a fence. Good night."

The four men filed out of the house. When they were gone, Roarin' Bill turned to the two Mexicans, who had been listening to the conversation.

"Jist remember," he said, "that you ain't seen nobody nor heard anything."

"Sure," agreed Lightnin' quickly. "I am jus' like clem."

"Two clem," added Thunder. "W'at ees a clem?"

"Por Dios!" exclaimed Lightnin'. "The more I'm know from you, the crazier I theenk I am. And," he added with finality, "that ees all I hope."

"Sure," agreed Thunder. *"Buenas noches,* Onkle Beel."

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"Yeah! Good night. We're ridin' to Outlaw Springs before breakfast. Better take rifles. Not that you could hit a flock of hay barns—but it looks better. I uhh, . . ." Roarin' Bill rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Better not take any ca'tridges; yuh might shoot yourselves —or me."

CHAPTER II

PRUNE JUICE AND HENRY

TOM RICKY, proprietor of the Tonto Hotel in Tonto City, jerked up from behind his desk, listening in alarm. From the dining-room came the sudden sounds of crashing crockery, thudding blows and mingled battle cries. Ricky raced to the swinging doors which led into the dining-room.

Just at that moment Judge Van Treece, on the other side of the same doors, was leaving the scene of conflict at about the same speed.

Tom Ricky was short and fat, while the deputy sheriff was tall and thin; so Ricky went down on his face just inside the doors, while Judge Van Treece pin-wheeled halfway across the lobby, ending up in a sitting position, holding his head in both hands.

The dining-room was more or less a wreck. Oscar Johnson, the jailer, whom Judge Van Treece had nicknamed the Vitrified Viking, was struggling with another huge man, both of them sprawled across a table from which all the dishes had been swept.

About midway of the room stood Josephine Swensen, maid of all work and waitress extraordinary. Josephine, Oscar's lady love, was over six feet tall and would weigh about a hundred and eighty. She was a stringy-blonde, with little blue eyes and a huge nose. In her powerful right hand swung a pitcher of water.

Tom Ricky tried to order a cessation of hostilities, but his recent collision had done something to his vocal chords. Oscar finally turned his opponent over, and proceeded to hammer him on the head with the side of his huge fist, like a carpenter driving spikes.

Swish! That heavy water-pitcher arced across the intervening space, and landed *clunk!* against the top of Oscar's blond head. Oscar said, "Oof!" and sat down beside the table, drawing the crumpling tablecloth off over his head, concealing himself entirely.

The big fellow who had been the victim of Oscar's hammer-like right looked around vaguely, took one step, tripped over Oscar's extended feet, and crashed against another table. The table went over, dumping the remains of Judge Van Treece's meal on the floor.

"Who in de ha'al do you t'ink you are?" queried Oscar through the folds of the tablecloth.

The man didn't say. He got to his feet and headed for the swinging doors, a blank expression in his eyes. That is, in one eye; the other was tightly closed and was rapidly assuming a pure mauve tint.

Oscar tore the concealing cloth away, felt of his head. Slowly he got to his feet, glowering at Tom Ricky. His eyes beheld the water pitcher, and he turned accusing eyes upon Josephine.

"We're de ha'al is Olaf?" he asked.

"Get out of here!" croaked Tom Ricky, "You—you damn bull in a china store."

"Damn fool in a restaurant," corrected Josephine.

"Ya-a-ah, su-ure," sneered Oscar. "Va'al, Ay can ta'all you dis much—Olaf is no yentleman."

"Olaf," defended Josephine, "has olvays acted like a yentleman."

"He may be a yentleman on de out-

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side," conceded Oscar, "but inside, he's yust a bum."

"Wait a minute!" wheezed Tom Ricky. "I don't care who is a gentleman and who isn't a gentleman. The fact remains that you two halfwits have wrecked my dining-room, chased out customers and raised the devil in general. Get out of here, you—you damn Swede!"

"Which von?" asked Oscar.

Josephine advanced with clenched hands, and Oscar headed for the swinging doors.

"You'll sure get a bill for this," declared Tom Rickey.

BUT Oscar was already out in the lobby, heading for the street. On the sidewalk he came face to face with Henry Harrison Conroy, the sheriff, and Judge Van Treece. The sheriff was there by chance; Judge, by choice.

In appearance, Henry was all that Roarin' Bill Rose had told the four men. Just now he was wearing a pearl colored fedora, which was a trifle too small, and carrying a cane.

Henry squinted closely at Oscar, whose face showed plainly that he had been to war.

"Ay am yust looking for Olaf," said Oscar blandly.

"Oh, is he still alive?" asked Henry. "Judge said you might murder him."

Tom Ricky came to the doorway and saw the three men. He strode out to them, a scowl on his face.

"Conroy, can't you control that damn Swede?" he asked. "Him and another big Swede just—"

"Norvegian!" corrected Oscar.

"Well, what's the difference?" asked Ricky warmly.

"De difference is dat I can vip any damn Norvegian on—"

"A certain racial difference, I believe," sighed Henry. "Please continue, Mr. Ricky."

"Well, them two big Swedes—"

"Vait! Von Norvegian and two Swedes."

"Two?"

"Yah, su-ure. Me and Yosephine. Olaf is a Norvegian."

"Josephine wasn't in this!" snapped Ricky.

"Ya-a-ah? Who t'rew de vater pitcher?"

"Well—"

"Yah! Va'all, go ahead."

"I give up," sighed Tom Ricky.

"Send the bill down to the office," said Henry as if this sort of thing were customary. "I'll take it out of Oscar's pay."

The three officers turned then and walked down the wooden sidewalk to the sheriff's office. They entered and sat down. Oscar blew on his sore knuckles, rubbed his swollen head and began making a cigarette.

"Oscar," said Judge, "there are times when I'm ashamed of you."

"Ay done my best, Yudge," sighed Oscar. "Ay had him olmost vipped, when Yosephine t'rew de pitcher."

"I suppose," remarked Henry, "that it will go down on the records as a draw. I saw Olaf crossing the street to the Tonto Saloon. He swam halfway, and treaded water the rest of the distance. Why did you run away from the battle, Judge?"

Uneasily, Judge got up and walked to the doorway. "Well, I — I was between Josephine and the battle," he explained. "I saw the look in her eye and the pitcher in her hand. Unfortunately, Mr. Ricky and I met amid swinging doors. I am still a trifle dizzy —but it will pass. I—"

His gaze straying up and down the dusty main street of Tonto City, he

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broke off suddenly, added as if anxious to change the subject:

"Here comes Ab Morgan, walking very much as though a scorpion had stung him while sitting down."

"While the scorpion was sitting down, Judge?"

JUDGE gave Henry a malevolent glance and came back into the office. Judge Van Treece had, in his earlier days, been a well-known lawyer, with a profound knowledge of the law; but his appetite for hard liquor and high-stake poker games had made a derelict of him, until Henry Harrison Conroy, seeing in Judge a kindred spirit, had made him deputy sheriff.

A moment later Ab Morgan came in, his spurs rattling, a scowl on his bony face. Morgan, owner of the Quarter-Circle M spread, was a huge man, quick of temper, arrogant and avaricious. He sat down, flung his hat on the floor and leaned toward Henry.

"I came in to get a warrant for the arrest of Roarin' Bill Rose," stated Morgan. "Soon's I get it, I want you to serve it."

"As soon?" queried Judge.

"As soon!" snapped Morgan.

"What has our friend Roarin' Bill done?" asked Henry curiously.

"He tore down my fence! Damn him, he's torn it down three times."

"It must be," murmured Henry, "that he doesn't like the fence."

"Yea-a-ah!" snorted Morgan. "What right has he got to tear down my fences?"

"It seems to me," said Henry, "that we could discuss this much better if you would tell us what fence—and why it has been torn down three times."

"Do yuh know where Outlaw Springs is?"

"Yes," nodded Henry.

"All right. I claim that water; so I fenced it. Every time I fence that water, Roarin' Bill Rose tears the fence down. I'm through sendin' him a warnin'. If the law won't stop him—I will."

"Mr. Morgan, have you a legal title to that water?" Van Treece asked.

"Legal be damned! It's on my property."

"Possibly on your range," admitted Judge, "but has never been legally acquired."

"I didn't buy it—no! But I've claimed it for six years. I've got a moral claim."

"I—really, I have never seen a moral fence," said Henry quietly.

"As a matter of fact," put in Judge hastily, trying to dim the glare which Morgan gave Henry, "you have fenced Outlaw Springs for your own use."

"I have."

"Those springs have never been fenced before?"

"Not till I fenced 'em."

"I see. That is about the only water on that side of the range, except for a spring further over on your range."

"That's right."

"What will Roarin' Bill Rose do for water?"

"Move his damn cows over on the other side of Broken Wheel Canyon, I reckon. What the hell do I care what he does with 'em! That's his funeral."

"If he did that," remarked Henry, "it would also give you all the feed on this side of the canyon."

"Wait a minute!" snapped Morgan. "Are you intimatin' that I'm tryin' to run the Lazy R off that range?"

"If there's no water for them—" suggested Judge quietly.

"All right, all right! But no damn man can intimate—"

"Period!" interrupted Henry sharp-

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ly. "We are merely trying to determine whether my office has any right to interfere. I never intimate. In fact, I don't like the word at all. It is very obvious that if the water is taken from the Lazy R—they must leave that range. Ergo—your cows get the benefit. But does Roarin' Bill confiscate the fence?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Merely a point of law, sir. You might have him arrested for stealing your fence. As I see it, the matter is between you and Mr. Rose."

"It's a shootin' matter," declared Morgan grimly.

"Oh, I hope not. Life is too short to kill over water. Now, if it was whisky—"

"Yo're a hell of a sheriff!" roared Morgan hotly. He jumped to his feet and grabbed up his hat.

Henry did not move from his chair.

"Better judges than you, sir, have told me that," he answered. "In fact, long ago, I discovered it for myself."

"All right—I'll protect myself!"

"That, sir, is the very first law of nature," smiled Henry.

MORGAN stalked out of the office then, grumbling to himself. When he was well out of earshot Judge sighed. "I'm afraid there will be trouble over that water," he said. "Roarin' Bill Rose has only those two dumb Mexican cowboys while Morgan has six or eight pretty tough riders. The odds are against Bill."

"And still," murmured Henry, "I believe Roarin' Bill Rose can take care of himself. Do you know much of his past life, Judge?"

"A little. I believe he was a fugitive from justice when he came here. Perhaps the money he used to purchase his ranch was part of his ill-gotten gains. However, he has gone straight so no one has molested him. His dealings in Wild Horse Valley have all been on the square. I do not believe that Morgan and his Quarter-Circle M outfit have made life any too pleasant for old Roarin' Bill. Personally, I feel that in this case Bill is within his rights."

"I feel the same," Henry said. "I believe I shall speak to Bill. He could get an injunction against Morgan to prevent him from fencing the water."

"Bill Rose will never go to law to settle his troubles," declared Judge. "His only injunction will be a gun."

"Ay vonder vere Olaf vent," said Oscar, feeling of his sore scalp.

"Do you want to apologize to him?" asked Judge.

"Ay vant to poke him in the snu-ute, Yudge."

"You stop poking people in the snoot. Why can't we have some dignity in this office? No wonder they call this 'The Shame of Arizona'."

"True," sighed Henry. "It irks me sore. Oscar, were you ever irked?"

"Ya-ah, su-ure," nodded Oscar. "Von time Ay bought a diamond ring from a drommer for fifty dollar, and Ay found out—"

"Oh, hell!" snorted Judge. "I wish Frijole would bring in some of his abominable prune whisky. Anything to break the monotony. By the way, Oscar, has Frijole quit distilling?"

Frijole Bill Cullison was the cook at Henry's JHC Ranch, and a distiller of prune juice. The finished product was liquid dynamite to the interior of man.

"Ay yust brought gallon yesterday," replied Oscar. "Yumpin' Yudas, das last prune yuice is gude. Ay took t'ree drink at de ranch and Ay saw t'ree hurses. Ay got on de middle von, and de odder two coom along."

"Hm-m!" murmured Henry. "There

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must be virtue in it, Judge. At least Oscar knew which horse to pick."

"Yust prunes," declared Oscar. "Free-holey says he put in squirt of hurse-leeniment to make it taste gude."

Oscar lumbered into the back room and came back with the jug and some tin cups. Henry sniffed at the liquor.

"Whew! Squirt, eh? Well, gentlemen, my very best to you both."

They drank. Judge and Henry choked, wiped away the tears and looked at each other.

"Not bad," whispered Henry. "It warms the cockles of my heart. I must remember to compliment Frijole."

"Sulphuric acid on a kerosene base," whispered Judge huskily. "My gullet is still smoking. That cook can distill the most damnable concoctions I have ever swallowed, Henry. I wonder what a man would do, if he were to get drunk on that stuff."

"I think," replied Henry, a queer expression on his face, "that if you will watch real close for about ten minutes you'll find out."

"Whooee-e-e!" snorted Oscar, without changing expression. "Ay am about to sink."

"Go ahead," urged Judge expansively. "We will join you in the chorus."

CHAPTER III

WANTED FOR MURDER

AB MORGAN was still smarting over his failure to impress the sheriff. Somehow he had expected Henry to be willing to take up the case. He knew the courts would not interfere, because he had no legal ownership of the water. He wanted the water and he also wanted to force the Lazy R cows off that side of the canyon. Having suffered for the time being a setback to his plans, he stalked over to the Tonto Saloon, where he proceeded to drink too much liquor. It was not often that Ab Morgan drank to excess, especially when as today, Sally Morgan, his step-daughter, had come to town with him.

Sally had driven the buckboard team to Tonto City, and when she finished her shopping she discovered that Ab Morgan was in no mood to go home. She left him to return to his drinking and walked worriedly down the street. Sally was twenty, a tall, lithe young lady—the hope and despair of every cowboy who saw her.

Henry Harrison Conroy, fortified with two drinks of Frijole's prune whisky, met Sally on the street. He doffed his fedora and bowed.

"It must be," he declared, "that there is a holiday in Heaven. Otherwise, how could an angel have the time to come to Tonto City?"

Sally smiled. "Are you ever serious, Mr. Conroy?" she asked.

"My dear Miss Morgan, if I were—er—forty years younger, I would really be serious. How in the name of all Arizona suns do you manage to keep so fresh and beautiful?"

"I am neither fresh nor beautiful, Mr. Conroy—I'm just plain worried. It seems that Dad is—well, he is over at the Tonto Saloon, and—"

Henry pursed his lips. "I see-e-e. Hm-m-m. Dallying unduly with the juniper juice."

"I believe so," sighed Sally. "I don't know what to do about it. I sent word to him that I was ready to go home, and he—sent word back to me, saying to drive carefully, so as not to break the eggs."

"Mr. Morgan is a trifle upset over Roarin' Bill Rose, I believe."

"Breathing fire and brimstone," said Sally. "Oh, I hope they don't get to-

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gether. They each have a hair-trigger temper."

"I hope not," agreed Henry. "But if you want my advice, Miss Morgan, I would tell you to go back home alone. You might have some of the boys come in later, bringing an extra horse. Perhaps, by that time, he will have drunk himself into a state of docility."

"That's true," she agreed. "Maybe your advice is good."

"My advice is always good," smiled Henry, "if you understand what I mean. Judge says that my advice comes from the heart, rather than from the brain; kindly, but rarely consistent."

"You're very honest. Mr. Conroy."

"When Diogenes met me he threw away his lantern," said Henry soberly. "I still have the scar on my head."

Henry walked with her to the buckboard, untied the team for her. She handled the half-wild sorrel team well, waving back at him as they swept out of town.

Pursuing his prune-juice inspired saunter, in front of the post-office Henry met Danny Regan, foreman of his JHC Ranch. Danny was young and impulsive, but competent.

"I've been listenin' to Ab Morgan," Danny announced. "He's shore got a big war-talk, Henry. Says he's goin' to run Roarin' Bill Rose out of the Valley, and then he's goin' to get the Commissioners to force you to resign. He's gettin' pretty drunk. Course, he'll forget it all when he gets sober, but if I was you I wouldn't go over there. Just as well keep away from him while he's in that mood. I reckoned he was kinda workin' around to include me in the talk; so I stepped out."

Henry nodded contemptuously. "I believe he will be all right, unless Roarin' Bill Rose comes to town," he said. "Morgan is inclined to talk big."

EVENING came and still Ab Morgan talked. In spite of heavy drinking his intoxication never got beyond the swaggering, boasting point. Cal Essex, Morgan's foreman, and several of the boys rode in, bringing an extra horse.

Later came Roarin' Bill Rose, all alone, and with no information that Ab Morgan wanted his scalp. He went blithely into the Tonto Saloon, where he met Morgan face to face. One glance at Morgan, and Roarin' Bill Rose knew he was facing trouble. Both Rose and Morgan wore holstered guns. Several men, who were directly behind Morgan, moved aside quickly, so as to be out of line of the two men.

"I've been waitin' for you to show up, Rose," said Morgan.

"Sorry to keep yuh waitin'," replied Roarin' Bill grimly. "Hope I ain't too late."

"Yo're just in time."

Roarin' Bill's keen eyes watched Morgan's hands, and there was a thin smile on his face.

"Fingers nervous, Morgan?" he said. "It ain't possible that yo're lookin' for trouble, is it? I never did think yuh had nerve enough to reach for a gun. Still don't think so. What's eatin' yuh, anyway?"

"I sent you a warnin' about that fence, didn't I?" asked Morgan.

"Yeah, that's right."

"And you went out next mornin' and tore it down again."

"That's right. I ain't much of a hand to believe what I read."

"Yuh ain't, eh? Well, I'm goin' to tell yuh somethin'—and you better believe it."

"Go ahead. Mebbe I still won't believe it, Morgan."

"Yo're through in Wild Horse Valley, Rose. I've put up with yuh as long

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as I'm goin' to. Yore damn outfit ain't worth two whoops in hell, anyway. I'm givin' yuh twenty-four hours to get out of this valley. I hope you understand what I mean."

"Well, yuh didn't leave much for my imagination," said Roarin' Bill. "Twenty-four hours? That's awful funny, Morgan. Or are you so drunk that you don't realize what yo're sayin'?"

"I said — twenty-four hours!" snarled Morgan. "After that—look out for yourself."

"I've been lookin' out myself for years, Morgan. I think yo're a big-mouthed, lantern - jawed, bat - eared bluffer. How about finishin' this deal right here—now? You've got a gun. It'll be an even break. Why wait twenty-four hours? Hell, I'm not movin'; so yuh don't need extra time."

Morgan moistened his lips with his tongue. In spite of the fact that he was intoxicated he realized the danger of starting a draw. Roarin' Bill, sober, possibly a faster man with a gun at any time, had all the advantage. It would be suicide to move now.

"That twenty-four hours still stands," he said stubbornly. "When that time limit is up—watch out."

Roarin' Bill turned on his heel then and left the saloon. The crowd sighed with relief. The games resumed, and the men proceeded to forget what had been said. Ab Morgan stood moodily at the bar for quite a while, and no one paid any attention when he walked out.

Henry Harrison Conroy heard about the quarrel. He was told that Roarin' Bill had left the saloon and had likely gone home, but a little later Henry saw Roarin' Bill's horse tied in front of the general store. Thinking that trouble was twenty-four hours away, Henry went back to the office, where Judge was reading by the office lamp, and told Judge about Morgan's ultimatum to Roarin' Bill.

"Mr. Morgan must think he is dictator of the valley," said Judge, marking his page by folding it. "Twenty-four hours is rather a short time for a man to dispose of his holdings. I am afraid that Roarin' Bill Rose will still be here when the twenty-four hours have— What was that?"

From somewhere nearby came the muffled thuds which sounded very much like revolver shots. Henry and Judge ran to the doorway. A group of men had left the Tonto Saloon, apparently for the location of the shots. From over in front of the general store a man was calling to them, and they came running. Henry and Judge joined them. The man was Tom Ricky, proprietor of the hotel.

"In the store!" he yelled. "I just went past, when the shooting started!"

They crowded inside the building. Lying on the floor about midway of the room, his head and shoulders against the counter, was Ab Morgan. His sixshooter was lying a foot away from his right hand.

Henry bent down quickly and examined him. When he looked up again his face was very sober.

"He's dead," he said. "But who—how—you!" he blurted at the storekeeper, who stood there, a kerosene can in his hand. "Where were you?"

"Good Lord!" gasped the man. "Why, Roarin' Bill Rose came in here a few minutes ago. He wanted some kerosene. I had to tap a new can; so I—why, he was in here alone, when I left."

Someone yelled outside, and the yell was echoed by the thudding of hoofs. It was then that Henry remembered seeing Roarin' Bill's horse outside the store. Among them, Morgan's men.

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"Get your horses and go after him—all of you!" ordered Henry. "I deputize you. We'll be with you as soon as we can get horses. He's gone to his ranch."

"That horse of his couldn't outrun a goat!" exclaimed Cal Essex, Morgan's foreman. "C'mon, boys!"

Henry and Judge hurried to their stable. They saddled clumsily, with Judge complaining about his rheumatism. Judge abhorred horseback riding and he did not care who knew it.

"Roarin' Bill went out the back door, after the shooting," deducted Henry. "He circled the building, while we were inside, and made his escape."

"It dovetails," groaned Judge, as he mounted.

"Dovetails with what?"

"With other asinine deductions you have made. The thing is obvious. Any nine-year-old child could have figured that out."

"I don't suppose I ever will."

"Does that make sense? You don't suppose you ever will. Ever will what?"

"Be a first-class detective, Judge. Now, if you can possibly browbeat that oat-destroyer to a gallop, we might get there before the cowboys get back."

THE eight riders, headed by Cal Essex meanwhile were thundering in at Roarin' Bill's ranch house. In hopes of overtaking Bill they had run the hearts out of their mounts.

There was a dim light in the main room. A door at the rear closed softly. Two cowboys ran around the house, glimpsed a dim figure heading for an old shed.

"Stop, before I shoot yuh!" yelled one of the cowboys. As he called he stumbled over an unseen rock. That error saved his life—for on the instant a bullet answered him from the darkness, neatly parting his hair and practically ruining a nearly-new sombrero.

The other cowboy fell over him and went sprawling on the ground. Strangely enough three other figures were running away from the house now, in an entirely different direction. When Cal Essex yelled to them to halt, a volley of bullets whined so close to the six other men of the posse that they dived for safety.

The two cowboys came stumbling around the house and nearly got shot by the six. They finally became normal enough to ask if anybody had shot Roarin' Bill Rose.

"I seen him all right," declared the cowboy whose scalp was still tingling. "I'd have got him, too, except that I stumbled."

"Me, too," added his companion. "Only I fell over you, Gus."

"That's fine," said Essex sarcastically. "Well, we seen three of him—and not a damn one of us fired a shot."

"Three of him, eh?" said the cowboy foolishly. "Well, two of 'em might be Thunder and Lightnin' Mendoza."

"Aw, hell!" snorted Essex. "Them two Mexicans don't even pack guns. You fellers seen one man and we seen three. That's four."

"Eddication is wonderful," sighed a cowboy.

"Yea-a-ah! Yuh ort to get some for yourself. But what four men would be here at the ranch—ready to shoot at us?"

"It's a cinch it ain't Henry and Judge," chuckled one of the men.

They opened the door and crowded into the ranch house. There were empty cups on the table, and an empty bottle, all smelling strongly of liquor.

Further investigation showed that there were no horses in the stable.

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"Well," observed Essex, "it's a cinch that Roarin' Bill didn't come home."

THEY were back in the ranch house when Henry and Judge arrived. Essex explained about the shooting in the dark. The one cowboy exhibited a bullet burn across his head, and the damaged sombrero.

"Rather mysterious," agreed Henry. "Four empty cups and an empty whisky bottle."

"And four men, who opened fire upon a command to halt," added Judge soberly. "Who are they, why were they here, and why were they so anxious not to be stopped?"

Henry looked around at the sober faces.

"If any of you pupils can answer any of the teacher's questions—do not hesitate," he said, beaming upon them.

"Hell, he can't answer his own questions!" snorted Cal Essex. "It seems that we can't do a thing here; so I better get back. Are yuh sure Ab Morgan's dead, Henry?"

Henry nodded. "I'm very sorry," he said. "It will be a blow to Miss Sally."

"I hope to tell yuh," agreed Essex.

"You better find Roarin' Bill Rose before we do," said one of the Quarter-Circle M cowboys meaningly.

"Yes, I believe it would be better," replied Henry soberly. "But if you take my advice, you will make it 'we' and not 'I'. Roarin' Bill shoots very straight, they tell me."

They filed out quietly and mounted their horses, leaving Henry and Judge to make their own pace on the return journey.

"There is something complicated about this, Judge," declared Henry, as they rode away from the ranch house. "What four men would be in that house tonight? Roarin' Bill never seemed to have any cronies who knew him so well that they would enter his home, while he was away, and help themselves to his liquor. It smacks of mystery."

"And my old legs smack of rheumatism," groaned Judge. "Mystery! The only real mystery is how I can ever get my two feet close enough together to take a few steps, after riding a horse five miles."

"You are getting old, Judge."

"I am not, sir! Old, indeed! My mind is more alert than when I was twenty."

"Then you should ride standing on your head, Judge. Your underpinning is getting worn. The other day I was reading an article about termites—"

"Are you suggesting that I have termites, sir?"

"Possibly only dry-rot. The article said—"

"Rot! I was just thinking about Sally Morgan. This will hit her very hard, Henry."

"Very. While I am not inclined to wear sackcloth and ashes because of Ab Morgan, I really feel sorry for Sally."

The two rode on in silence then.

CHAPTER IV

MISSING MEN

DAYLIGHT disclosed the fact that there was blood on the floor of the Tonto general store near the back door, and several splashes on the wooden sidewalk, where Roarin' Bill Rose had apparently crossed to his horse at the hitch-rack. One cartridge in Ab Morgan's gun had been fired.

"It is evident that Ab Morgan shot Bill Rose," said Henry.

"If it was a fair fight, why did Roarin' Bill run away?" asked Cal Essex.

"My dear boy, that is a question," replied Henry. "Panic, perhaps. Roar-

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in' Bill's reputation is not the best in the world, and perhaps he was afraid it might react against him, in the event that he was arrested. With no witnesses to the shooting, Bill might have felt that the law might not listen kindly to his explanation."

"If Roarin' Bill is wounded, we better look for him," said Judge. "He might be dying out there along the road."

There were plenty of volunteer searchers. They started out promptly. Where the old road winds along the rim of Broken Wheel Canyon there is a pot-hole in the solid rock, known as the Devil's Chimney. It is about twenty feet wide across the top, sloping inward to a ledge, two hundred feet down. This ledge blocks off about two-thirds of the hole and is a mass of broken rock and stunted brush. Here the Chimney narrows to what seems a bottomless hole.

About fifty feet from the edge of the Devil's Chimney one of the searchers discovered Roarin' Bill's old sombrero, recognized by all of them. Near the edge of the hole were sharp marks on the rocks, where shod hoofs had scraped. Sprawling along the rim and peering into the depths, the searchers were able then to see the broken remains of Roarin' Bill's horse and saddle, where the horse had crashed onto the ledge.

There was no sign of Roarin' Bill's body, but there was no doubt in the minds of the searchers that Bill's body lay somewhere down there in that tangle of rocks and brush or on the bottom, smashed beyond recognition.

"It was dark as heck last night," said a cowboy. "He was foggin' around this turn, probly runnin' kinda blind, and went right over the edge. You can see them marks, where the horse tried to stop. I figure that Roarin' Bill sunk his spurs pretty deep, when the bronc shifted his stride—and they went over."

"That seems to be the picture," sighed Henry. "But I suppose we may as well ride out to the Lazy R, anyway."

They found Thunder and Lightning Mendoza at the ranch. They had been down near the Mexican Border, visiting friends, and had just returned. They gazed with apprehension on this group of riders.

"Have yuh seen Roarin' Bill Rose today?" Cal Essex asked them.

"We no see since yes'erday," declared Lightning.

"Where were you fellers last night?"

"We go veesit yes'erday," informed Thunder. "Las' night we stay weeth hees onkle."

Thunder pointed at Lightning.

"Ain't he yore uncle, too?" asked one of the riders.

"I'm theenk so—but I'm get damn tired from argue. Lightning hee's always mak' claim. W'at you want, eh?"

"Perhaps I'd better do the talking," suggested Henry. He turned to the two Mexicans. "Last night Roarin' Bill Rose shot and killed Ab Morgan, in Tonto City."

"*Bway-noo!*" exploded Lightning. It was merely his pronunciation of "*Bueno!*"

"That ees damn good," agreed Thunder.

"Wait a moment, boys," warned Henry.

At that, some of the Quarter-Circle M cowboys started to dismount.

"It is merely a matter of opinion."

He turned to the two Mexicans. "After Roarin' Bill shot and killed Ab Morgan, Roarin' Bill rode out of Tonto City. We suppose he was coming out here, as fast as his horse could run. However, he made a mistake in the

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dark, and rode his horse over the edge of the Devil's Chimney."

"Madre de Dios!" gasped Lightning. "Onkle Beel ees died?"

"It seems that such is the case," replied Henry soberly.

"Well," remarked Thunder, "that ees the firs' time Onkle Beel ever do those."

"He prob'ly won't do it ag'in, either," said a cowboy dryly.

Henry and Judge searched the house, accompanied by Thunder and Lightning. Henry was curious to know if Roarin' Bill had any relatives whom they might notify. Thunder and Lightning did not know. In a table drawer they found a letter from Sam Hartridge, a lawyer in Scorpion Bend.

It was several months old, and was in regard to a will. The lawyer advised Roarin' Bill to rent a safety deposit box in the bank, and keep the will there, instead of in the lawyer's safe. Whether Roarin' Bill had done this remained to be seen.

"That will, wherever it is, might disclose some living relative," said Judge. "We will get in touch with Mr. Hartridge, Henry. I happen to know him, and I can assure you that he is not a credit to the profession. In fact, I feel sure that he is not a bit reliable, when it suits Mr. Hartridge to be otherwise."

"That," remarked Henry soberly, "seems to be part of the curriculum."

"I resent that, sir!"

"I always have," sighed Henry. "But what can be done about it?"

They rode away, leaving Thunder and Lightning wondering what was going to happen to them, with no one left to pay wages.

FROM the nearby brush, Pecos Charley Peters, Sody Slade, Ed Clovis and Zibe Tucker watched until the riders disappeared.

"It's shore got me fightin' my hat," declared Pecos. "What the hell was the idea of that bunch of riders last night, yellin' at us to stop? And here they are again, along with the sheriff and deputy. I'd shore like to know what's happened to Roarin' Bill."

"Somethin' damn wrong," declared Ed Clovis nervously. "Do yuh suppose they've picked up our trail? Mebbe Roarin' Bill got drunk and talked about us."

"I don't believe that," said Sody. "I'm goin' in and see if them two lazy Mexicans know what's wrong."

"Let's all go," suggested Clovis. "I'm gettin' jumpy."

They found Thunder and Lightning on the little porch.

"Where's Bill Rose?" asked Sody.

"Onkle Beel ees dead," replied Lightning.

"Dead? Good Gawd! Who—how'd he get killed?"

"Leesten," said Lightning. "Onkle Beel hees go to Tonto Ceety and keel Meester Morgan. Then hees ride like hell and fall in to Devil's Cheemney."

The four outlaws looked at each other queerly. With Roarin' Bill Rose dead, they would never be able to realize on their stolen gold ore. After all their hard work and planning—everything was lost.

"Good gosh!" wailed Pecos Charley. "Why—he—he just took that assay sample to Scorpion Bend. He said that assayer was a talkin' fool. A gold strike on the Lazy R—and us livin' in a tunnel!"

"I'm not quittin'," declared Sody Slade. "Not after makin' a pack horse out of myself all that time. A fifth of that gold belongs to me, and I'm goin' to collect."

"I feel the same about it," agreed Clovis. "We'll wait an' see what hap-

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pens. There's at least seventy-five thousand dollars' worth in there."

They started back to the hide-out. Thunder and Lightning looked at their departing forms and at each other. It was the first time they had heard about the gold in the tunnel. Seventy-five thousand dollars' worth!

"How much ees that?" queried Thunder.

"How much? Hm-m-m. You know how much ees one hunnerd dollars?"

"Sure."

"Thees ees more."

"How much more?"

"*Cuidado!* How the hell you s'pose I'm going to theenk, huh? I'm got to use your brain. Thees job ees gone now. You 'member those lawyer from Scorpion Bend? He come here to see Onkle Beel."

"Sure. W'at he look like?"

"That ees the one. I theenk I go see heem."

"See heem for w'at?"

"*Mucho dinero.*"

"You ask heem for money?"

"Sh-h-h! Keep mouth shut. Say notheeng. You wan' be *vaquero* all my life? Hm-m-m! I'm wan' be reech man. You stay here and cook the frijole, w'ile I'm go to Scorpion Bend."

THAT night in Scorpion Bend the depot agent, working at his telegraph key, glanced up and saw a man looking through the window. His impression was that the man's bare head was swollen, his hair matted, his eyes blank and staring. Then the man turned slowly away.

A freight train had just arrived, and the agent was too busy to investigate right then. So he did not know that the man had stumbled out along the cars. As he passed one, a door was slid carefully open.

"Lookin' for a place to ride?" a voice called out to him.

The man hesitated, stumbled back toward the open door. Several hands helped him into the box car.

After the train was rolling out of Scorpion Bend, one of the men in the car lighted a match and took a look at their latest passenger. The match burned down to his fingers, and with a choice explosion of profanity he tossed it aside.

"We've got to git this feller off our hands quick as we can," he told the others. "He's in bad shape."

"What's the next stop?" asked one of them.

"Black River City's the next town. This feller may die before we can get him there. If he does, I'm travelin' mighty fast, 'cause it'll sure look like murder."

Back at Scorpion Bend the agent looked all over for the strange-looking man, but could not find him.

CHAPTER V

IMPOSTOR

IRA HALLAM, the assayer of Scorpion Bend, was short, fat and wheezy. He always needed a shave, his fingers were acid-stained, and he invariably needed a clean shirt. Ira was a particular friend of Sam Hartridge, the lawyer, who was six feet, one inch tall, very skinny, and had a great capacity for whisky. Hartridge always dressed in rusty black, affecting white collars and flowing bow ties.

Just now they were in Hartridge's office on the main street of Scorpion Bend, and Hallam was wheezing with excitement. Hartridge sucked on an empty pipe and waited for Hallam to tell him what all the excitement was about.

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"It's a million-dollar strike!" whispered Hallam.

"Who made it?" queried Hartridge.

"Roarin' Bill Rose—but he don't know it yet. I just finished an assay from a sample he brought me—and it's so damn rich that I'm almost afraid I made a mistake. Why, the darned thing was shot full of gold! Jewelry ore—or I've never seen any."

Hartridge carefully filled his pipe, but his lean fingers shook.

"Roarin' Bill Rose, eh?" he muttered. "That old Two-Gun mine. It never produced a dollar. Neither did the old Comanche property, on Morgan's ranch. How do you know this sample came from Roarin' Bill's mine?"

"He told me it did, Sam. He doesn't know a thing about ore. Why, you could see the gold in that sample."

"What are you excited about?" asked Hartridge curiously. "Suppose he has made a strike—what of it, Ira? It doesn't mean that we can find that same ledge and locate it for ourselves."

"I don't know," admitted Hallam. "It—it's so damn rich."

He turned and looked through the window at the street, where the Scorpion Bend-Tonto City stage was pulling in from Tonto City. On the seat with the driver was Henry Harrison Conroy.

"Old Funny-Face coming to town," laughed Hartridge.

Hallam turned back to him.

"It's so damn rich, Sam," he said again, plaintively.

"Maybe there should be a law against it," laughed Hartridge.

"If we only had the money to buy out the Lazy R," sighed Hallam.

"We could pool about a dollar and six-bits," said Hartridge.

At that moment Henry Harrison Conroy opened the door and walked in.

"I give you good afternoon, Mr. Conroy," said Hartridge pleasantly.

"Thank you—I'll take it."

Hartridge introduced Henry to Ira Hallam, offered the sheriff a chair.

"I understand," stated Henry when he was comfortably seated, "that you have acted as attorney for William Rose of Tonto City. Perhaps he is better known as Roarin' Bill Rose."

"Well, I helped him make out his will," smiled Hartridge. "That is all I have done in that capacity."

"I see. Night before last Roarin' Bill Rose shot and killed Ab Morgan. In making his escape from Tonto City, it appears that Roarin' Bill, accidentally, I suppose, rode his horse over the edge of the Devil's Chimney. We have been unable to locate the body, because of the nature of the place, but can see the horse. It would require about two hundred feet of rope—"

"You say that Roarin' Bill is dead?" interrupted Hartridge.

"Unfortunately—yes. A letter from you, in which you advised him to place his will in a safety deposit box at the bank, came to my attention. Naturally, we are anxious to contact some relative—if he had any."

"Yes," nodded Hartridge, "I wrote him to that effect some time ago, but he did nothing about it. I still have the will in my safe."

"Does it mention a relative?"

"Yes, it does. I believe he left everything to a nephew, named Frank Neilan, who lives in Detroit—or did live there. I don't believe that Roarin' Bill has heard from him in a long time. Of course, I shall try to get in touch with the man at once, Mr. Conroy."

"Yes, I believe that would be the thing to do."

Henry explained about the shooting,

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and that the evidence showed that Roarin' Bill had been wounded in the gunfight. Then he rose to go.

"Well, I'll get in touch with this heir of William Rose at once, if possible," said Hartridge. "The will is sealed, but I have the name and address. As soon as he reaches here, we will have a reading of the will and present it for probate."

For several moments after Henry left the office, Hartridge and Hallam looked at each other. Hartridge finally looked away and lighted his pipe.

"I've got the man, Sam," whispered Hallam. "He's a drifter—named Slim. Interested in mining. Hasn't got a dime, and I've been feeding him. Damn it, don't you understand what I'm driving at, Sam?"

"How the hell do you suppose I got admitted to the State bar?" asked Hartridge coldly.

"What about identifications?"

"Leave that to me. I'll write him a letter. He'll bring that letter back with him—from Detroit. Find out how far he'll go on a deal like this—and what he'll want. I'm alone in my house. Bring him out there tonight—late—and we'll talk it over."

"I'll do it," replied Hallam nervously. "Good Lord, Sam—it's a million dollar gamble."

Hartridge shrugged. "With my brains behind it, there's no gamble, Ira. Keep your nerve; you're shaking like a leaf already."

"Wait until you see the button of gold I got out of that small sample. You'll be shaky, too. I'll see you tonight—about midnight."

THE inquest brought no new developments, but because of the strong circumstantial evidence the jury decided that Ab Morgan had come to his death from gunshot wounds inflicted by Roarin' Bill Rose. Ever since the night of the shooting the riders from Quarter-Circle M had ranged the hills, still seeking Roarin' Bill. They did not find him. They knew he had been wounded badly, and the only logical answer was that his body was far down there in the Devil's Chimney; but they wanted to be sure.

"Bill couldn't have gotten out of the valley, wounded as he was, without attracting attention," remarked Henry, as he and Judge and Oscar got together in the office after the inquest. "We will take it for granted that he is at the bottom of that damnable hole in the earth. But who were the four men who shot at the posse that night at the Lazy R? That is the real puzzle, Judge."

Judge shook his head. "It couldn't have been that Bill Rose beat them to the ranch. No, that is out of the question. Hm-m-m. As you remarked before, Roarin' Bill has no friends—no one who would feel free to enter his home during his absence and help themselves to his liquor. What did you think of Mr. Hartridge, the lawyer?"

"Very pleasant, Judge—very. My first impression was that he is an estimable disciple of renowned Blackstone."

"Blackstone! He learned his law from mail-order catalogues."

"Well, that may be. And still, if he knows everything contained in a mail-order catalogue, he has a certain knowledge. Their contents cover many things. You couldn't say that they are narrow or bigoted, Judge."

"Ay bought suit from von," remarked Oscar. "It vars narrow."

"But not bigoted," said Henry

"Yust in de pants."

"I see—the pants were bigoted. Well,

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that might happen. By the way, how are you and Josephine hitting it off these days, Oscar?"

"Hitting? Yumpin' Yudas! Ay haven't been to see Yosephine since she t'rew de pitcher. Last night Ay saw her t'rough de vindow and she made a snu-ute at me. Ay made snu-ute right back at her, by Yiminy."

"That is love," choked Judge. "Two adult Swedes making snoots at each other through a window. Who won, Oscar?"

"Ve vere not snu-uting for a prize, Ay'll say dat."

"Go and get Frijole's jug," ordered Henry huskily. "I feel a nervous breakdown coming on. Hurry, Oscar."

THE blinds were drawn tight in Sam Hartridge's little home at Scorpion Bend. Sam was a bachelor, living alone, and taking most of his meals at a restaurant. Ira Hallam, the assayer, sprawled in an easy chair, while the third man sat near him, his hat on his lap.

He was the man they called Slim. His clothes were not of the best, but were fairly neat and clean. He was tall and lithe, his features clean-cut. He was perhaps twenty-five years of age.

"Did Hallam tell you anything about this deal?" asked Hartridge.

"Nothing, except that you wanted to talk with me," replied the young man.

"What is your right name?"

"We don't need to go into that, do we?" queried the young man.

Hartridge smiled knowingly. "Not at all, Slim. One name is as good as another. Hallam told me you were from the East."

"This is my first trip west."

"Good. No one knows you in this country?"

"Not a soul."

"Hallam says you are interested in mining."

"I studied it at college. They threw me out, before I had a chance to graduate. Yes, I know something about it. That was how I happened to meet Mr. Hallam. I saw his office sign."

"That makes it work out fine," smiled Hartridge. "Here is the deal. . . ."

Slim listened in amazement as the lawyer outlined their scheme to get control of the Lazy R and, incidentally, the newly discovered gold vein. He told Slim all about Roarin' Bill Rose, about his troubles with the Morgan outfit, and the subsequent tragedy in Tonto City.

"I believe I understand the deal," said Slim when he had finished. "You want me to impersonate this heir, take over the property, and at the proper time sell out to you—at your price."

"That," nodded Hartridge, "is exactly what we want."

"Isn't it a dangerous undertaking?"

"Where is the danger? Roarin' Bill told me himself that he never saw this nephew in his life. He said he wasn't sure he was still alive—but that the man was his only living relative. I don't need to investigate. What the nephew doesn't know won't hurt him. News of that kind would never get to him. There will be no trouble in probating that will. Why, the deal is airtight. You sell out to us, leave the country—and that's all there is to the deal."

"And what do I get?"

Hartridge frowned thoughtfully for several moments.

"That is something that Ira and I did not decide."

"Oh, we'll take care of that," assured the assayer quickly.

"Not with me," replied Slim. "A

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deal is a deal. As long as I'm the main character in the deal, I'll take a third of the profits."

"Oh well, now wait a minute!" exclaimed Hartridge. "You couldn't ask that much, Slim."

The young man grinned slowly. "One-third, gentlemen."

"It might be arranged," said Hallam. "You see, Sam, if he was a partner—well, he couldn't hold us up — blackmail, I mean."

"Well, all right. It might be better, at that. Is it a deal, Slim?"

"Sure," nodded Slim.

"What about a written agreement?" queried Hallam.

"Not for me," said Slim quickly. "Nothing on paper."

"That's right," agreed Hartridge. "It's too dangerous. We've got to take each other's word for this deal."

"When do we start?" asked Hallam anxiously, now that the deal was assured.

"As soon as the heir gets here," laughed Hartridge. "My letter should get there about day after tomorrow and—"

"Good Lord, you didn't write him, did you, Sam?" interrupted Hallam.

"Certainly not! It will take him about four days to get here. That will be about next Tuesday. Yes, that would time it about right. I'll give Slim enough money for expenses and some better clothes, and he can go to Black River City. He can kind of keep under cover, until Tuesday morning, when he can take a train back here. Is that satisfactory to you, Slim?"

"Sure. I'll take that midnight train tonight."

"Right."

"Just one more detail, Mr. Hartridge," smiled Slim. "You haven't told me who I'm to impersonate."

"The name," replied the lawyer," is Frank Neilan, and you are from Detroit."

"Frank Neilan from Detroit," muttered Slim. "Why—uh—that's fine. Frank Neilan. Will I have to answer any questions about my relatives, or anything?"

"I don't know why you should. Anyway, you'll know as much about them as the man who asks the questions."

"Yes, I suppose that is true," grinned Slim. "Give me that money—and I'll see you Tuesday. From now on I'm Frank Neilan."

"And don't forget it," added Hallam.

"Don't worry; I won't forget."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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A Ghost in the House

By DALE CLARK
Author of "A Racket in Blondes," "The Devil in Hollywood," etc.

IT was a very funny thing. It would still have been a funny thing if it had happened to just anyone, but most especially was it funny that this thing should happen to Mr. Paragal. For Mr. Paragal was quite a guy in Hollywood. He had a good job—story supervisor at C-P-C—but his real fame came from his reputation as a skeptic.

He was the last guy on earth you'd expect to meet up with a ghost. . . .

"I'm from Missouri, you got to *show* me," was Mr. Paragal's pet remark. If you showed him, he then dusted the moth balls off that other old classic: "I don't believe anything I hear, and only half of what I see!" He was as stubborn as an army mule, and twice as suspicious. A regular doubting Thomas.

Funny how he got to *believe* in ghosts!

For of course he never had believed in them. He didn't swallow such stuff—spiritualism, telepathy, second sight, witchcraft, black art. Naturally not! In order to accept the most common, ordinary, everyday fact he had first to walk around it for a couple of days, look it over, feel of it, bite into it.

When he dined at the Troc, he would not simply surrender his check and take any hat the girl offered him as his own. No—Mr. Paragal had to inspect that hat inside and out, examine the initials in the band, try it on, and finally study the result in the mirror.

In short, the guy took nothing on trust. He doubted everything. He wouldn't even believe Roosevelt had been re-elected until the Electoral College made it official.

How could the ghost convince such a man?

Well, that's the story. . . .

It happened on location—in the mountains due east of Malibu, in a region the natives call Celluloid Alley because so many dramas have been

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filmed there. Celluloid Alley in the movies, however, is almost always referred to as "God's Country."

And it is beautiful. Emerald grass carpets the floor of the valley. Noble pines lift their heads on the mountain slopes. Limpid streams purl in their pebbled beds, or splash and fall in crystal rapids. All around the horizon lofty peaks look out to the Pacific.

On this location, director Harry Janifer was about to make the last shots of an epic script entitled *Maid of Mist Mountain*.—That was the *working* title. C-P-C subsequently released the opus as *Love All Night*.—But the title didn't make any difference, anyway. The plot was still the granddaddy of all God's Country dramas. The one where the handsome young mining engineer comes into the mountains, and meets this lovely and untutored child of nature, and she falls for him, but he only laughs fondly at her advances. So she goes away, and gets to be a famous actress, and the villain lures her to *his* lodge in those same mountains; and then the hero falls for her, seeing how swell she is dressed; but next he finds out about this villain, so he gives the girl the shoulder of ice. But meanwhile the villain is phenagling the hero out of his mine, and the girl finds out about *that,* so she—etc., etc.

ALL the indoor takes had been made right on the C-P-C lot, and were neatly shelved in metal boxes in the C-P-C vault. The hitch came when the company got up into Celluloid Alley, to the ranch that was their base of operations.

June Justine—the star—took one look at the ragamuffin costume she was supposed to wear; then she opened her lovely mouth and yelled like a panther. "I won't! I won't!"

"Listen, June. Listen!" Harry Janifer said. "You are playing the part of a simple little backwoods girl. You wear gingham and you got your hair in braids. It says so in the script, and common sense says so! A simple backwoods girl *can't* have a Simpson hair-do and wear Paris frocks. It wouldn't look right, and it wouldn't *be* right."

"I won't! I won't! I wo—!"

Harry Janifer tried yelling right back. "You will! I'm directing this picture! You will, or else!"

"Won't!"

"Will!"

"Won't! Won't! Won't!"

So Harry Janifer thought awhile, and finally he asked: "Well, June, *why* won't you?"

The star drew a long breath. "Because my Swami particularly warned me—"

June Justine, you see, was the reverse of Mr. Paragal in every way. Miss Justine was a beautiful blonde, but at that she was very lucky to be earning four thousand dollars a week. Deep in her secret heart, she knew this; and she intended to keep on being lucky.

She passed up no bets. She played all the superstitions straight across the board. She not only walked around ladders, and threw spilled salt over her shoulder, and never whistled in the dressing room, but also believed in numerology, crystal gazing, tea leaves and card readings. She was a sucker for palmistry. If she had ever heard of alectryomancy, she would have been a sucker for that, too.

At the present moment, she was wax in the hands of a Swami who fetched advice straight from the Dog-Star.

"The Swami warned me," she concluded, "not ever to wear any common, ugly clothes. He said it would spoil my vibrations."

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Harry Janifer threw up his hands. He couldn't argue with a Swami who wasn't even there.

He wired the C-P-C offices for instructions. June Justine was holding up a ten thousand dollar a day production schedule, and the producer would gladly have kicked both her and the Swami clear to the Dog-Star—but June's face was on practically every foot of that film in the vault.

That afternoon Mr. Paragal and a bright young writer named Joe Beetle flew in a chartered plane to Celluloid Alley. That's how it began. The mills of the gods not only grind very slow, but also they often grind whole bushels of corn to get at a particular kernel

MR. PARAGAL was the particular kernel in this case—but nobody guessed that yet. So far he was just one of the gang that sat in conference on the ranchhouse verandah There was also Joe Beetle, and Harry Janifer, June Justine, the wardrobe designer, cameramen, and script clerk.

It wasn't even Mr. Paragal's idea—Joe Beetle thought it up. "All right!" said Joe Beetle. "She don't have to wear clothes at all!"

"Why, you—" began June Justine.

"Get this!" Joe Beetle cried. "The engineer can find her in swimming, see? Wearing a bathing suit she made herself—kind of gay, and showing plenty of curves, but still kind of funny. It's the same idea as a gingham dress, and then she don't have to braid her hair either—it can be loose on her shoulders."

Harry Janifer said, "We can't have her in a bathing suit in *every* scene!"

Joe Beetle's round face grinned. "Why not? The engineer happens along past the old swimming hole every day, but still she don't make so much progress with him. So she thinks maybe her outfit is all wrong, see? So she turns up one day in a scream—one of those old bloomer suits, she made it herself. It hands the gink a laugh, and she says, 'Don't you like it? Why, I made it myself—copied it out of a big city magazine that belonged to Maw,' and she shows him the magazine—and we cut in on the date-line. 1891!

"So the gink laughs more than ever, but by this time the audience has quit laughing. So now we cut to the girl, and she starts crying, see? And we see how her heart is breaking—and she runs away and beats it to the city. How's that?"

"It's swell!" Harry Janifer said. "Ain't it, June?"

Miss Justine frowned, and thought, and said: "Well, the Swami didn't say anything about bathing suits. I guess it's oke."

Mr. Paragal frowned, too, and thought a much longer while. He never okayed a gag in a script unless that gag had been laughed at a hundred times in the past. He never okayed a scenario that wasn't just like every other scenario—that's why he was a story supervisor.

He was a little guy with a flinty face. He was the kind of guy almost everyone hates. The writers hated him because he always cut their bright ideas to pieces, and the directors hated him because they wanted to supervise their own stories. The cameramen hated him for no particular reason—just because he was that kind of a guy.

"Well, I have my doubts," he said at last. "It's never been done before, has it? I don't trust these new ideas."

This made the idea look twice as good to everybody else.

"No," said Mr. Paragal. "No, I think I'd better consider it a day or so."

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The ten thousand dollar a day overhead didn't bother him—let Harry Janifer worry about that.

Harry Janifer said, "I think it's a honey. I think it's better than the original script. Maybe there's something to this Swami stuff, after all."

"Nuts!" grunted Mr. Paragal. "I'm from Missouri, you got to *show* me."

Miss Justine blinked blissfully. "The Swami is wonderful—the things he tells you about yourself, things he couldn't possibly *know* except from the stars."

"Bunk! He hires private detectives," said Mr. Paragal.

"Still, funny things happen," began Joe Beetle. "I remember a dream my mother told me she had just before I was born—"

Mr. Paragal interrupted: "I don't believe anything I hear, and only half of what I see."

"That's easy for you to talk, Paragal," Harry Janifer said. "But I bet now, for instance, you wouldn't spend a night in a haunted house for a hundred dollars."

Mr. Paragal gave an incredulous laugh. "Say, I'd *give* a hundred dollars to spend a night in a haunted house! It would be worth it to show up that stuff!"

Harry Janifer tipped Joe Beetle a wink; then he leaned forward and said softly:

"Curiously enough, that old house up on the hill is said to be haunted."

Mr. Paragal looked around. The house stood on a hill about half a mile from the ranch building. It was very old, made of stone, and its windows were boarded.

"HOOEY!" said Mr Paragal with a louder laugh.

"No, I mean it," insisted the director. "One of those old Spanish dons lived there a hundred years ago. One night in a fit of jealous rage he killed his wife—cut off her head with his sword. The next day he learned she was innocent. So he committed suicide."

"There were no Spaniards here a hundred years ago," said Mr. Paragal with a superior smile. "The valley wasn't settled then."

"All the same, the don can be seen wandering about the empty rooms at night," said Janifer. "People have gone by there and heard him moaning and crying."

"You mean they heard the wind in the eaves."

"No, they looked in and saw him."

Mr. Paragal's thin lips twisted. "They saw cobwebs."

"That isn't all," and Harry Janifer drew a long breath. "When people look in, that makes the don sore. He picks up his wife's head and slings that at them."

"Anybody who saw *that* was drunk enough to see pink elephants," replied Paragal.

Janifer gave the rest of the company another wink. "Paragal," he said, "I'll bet you a hundred dollars you wouldn't dare go up there without a gun and spend the night."

Not a muscle flickered in Paragal's flinty face while he considered it. "I'm not a betting man."

"I knew you didn't dare!"

"Oh, I'm not afraid. I'd just be a fool to do that, when I could just as well be sleeping in a comfortable bed," replied the man from Missouri.

Janifer laughed. "You said you'd *give* a hundred dollars. You've got a chance to find out for yourself, but you are secretly too superstitious to tackle it."

The word *superstitious* rang the bell.

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Mr. Paragal smiled disagreeably. His sharp little eyes snapped. "I'll do it! But it'll cost you a hundred dollars—I'm taking your bet."

"It's a bet," Janifer grunted, "and I got fifty more says you change your mind before nightfall."

They named Joe Beetle stakeholder. As Harry Janifer counted the banknotes into Beetle's plump hand, he muttered under his breath:

"We'll *show* him! I bet the guy don't stop running this side of Pasadena! Then we'll go ahead and finish this picture *our* way."

Mr. Paragal didn't back down before nightfall. It was dusk when a property truck left the ranch and chugged up the hill. The driver, Paragal and Harry Janifer wedged into the seat. Joe Beetle and the make-up artist sat in the back, on a pile of blankets.

The house with its boarded windows somehow looked more sinister at night. The truck headlamps shone on a crazy porch, weather-blackened and falling to pieces. A bat swam blindly in the white beam.

"Whe-e-ew!" muttered Joe Beetle.

The front door was scarred with initials, hearts and arrows, and similar schoolboy art.

Mr. Paragal laughed shortly. "It looks like the don is pretty handy with a jackknife!"

"Maybe he uses his sword," Harry Janifer said.

"Bunk! Come, boys, bring that stuff in." Mr. Paragal swung down from the truck, took a flashlight from his pocket, and climbed the creaking front steps. He gave the door a push, and went in.

THE white circle of the flashlight played around the house. It found a decrepit stairway facing the door. Cobwebs festooned the bannister. Across the room was a dirty fireplace.

"Put the things there," ordered Mr. Paragal. The floor groaned as Joe Beetle stumbled with an armful of blankets to the fireplace. Behind him came the driver and the make-up expert, each with a load of faggots.

Mr. Paragal played the flashlight on the tattered, peeling walls. "Do you suppose they had wallpaper a hundred years ago?"

He watched Joe Beetle spreading the blankets. The writer's round face was very pale.

"Boo!" said Paragal, and laughed.

The laugh echoed gratingly through the house. Janifer came up to the story supervisor. "Remember the terms of the bet?" he said. "You haven't got a gun on you—have you?" He patted Mr. Paragal's pockets.

"No, why should I want a gun? The only thing I wonder is, how are you going to know I spent the night here? I could easily take those blankets and sleep outside."

Janifer nodded. "We brought a sack of flour. We'll scatter that around the doors. Besides, we may come up during the night to see how you're making out."

"Oh, I'll be asleep."

They went out, and Mr. Paragal smiled as he heard them sifting the flour about. Then he heard the truck growl away down the hill. His thin smile went away, then, too.

"It's rather cold in here. I'll just take the chill off." For some reason he said it aloud. And he really wasn't the kind of man who did much talking to himself.

Kneeling on the blankets, holding the flashlight between his knees while he did so, Mr. Paragal flung a generous heap of faggots onto the hearth. He fumbled for matches, struck one.

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The flame licked up eagerly, snapping and crackling. It cast a wavering red shine onto the cracked and peeling walls. Queer shadows flickered on the stairway.

Mr. Paragal sat down on the blankets. He watched the shadows, and his eyes grew a little wider than usual.

His nostrils widened, too. He sniffed. The air had a peculiar odor. It was dank, and fusty, and earthy; it smelled a little as Mr. Paragal imagined a grave would smell. . . . Smelled that way more . . . then just a little. . . .

"Bunk!" he said—aloud.

IT was an old house, and its air was stale—it smelled like any house that had been shut up a long time. Sure, it did!

But all the same he sat there with his eyes and nostrils widening and flaring, his eyes seeking and staring, his nose sniffing. And his ears were wide open, too. They caught every creak and rustle and groan in the place—and there were a lot of creaks and rustles and groans. The floor sighed every time he shifted his weight. The flames made other noises as they rushed up into the chimney.

Paragal said, "One of these days the whole business is going to fall down."

The fire burned down rapidly. He threw on more sticks and those burned, and he threw on more. He gave one glance to his fuel supply, and another to his watch. It was clear that the faggots wouldn't last through the night.

Mr. Paragal stood up and looked around the room. It was warm enough—so warm, indeed, that sweat dotted his forehead and soaked his collar. He no longer needed the fire. But he *wanted* it. The fire was a companionable and cheerful thing; and he did not fancy the thought of what this room would be like when there were just a few embers dying on the hearth.

There was a door across the room. He walked to it, and for some reason he walked on tiptoe. The door gave a loud shrill groan as he opened it. A thin cold prickle chased along his spine.

He threw the flash beam into the next room. There was nothing in there—nothing at all, except more bare and tattered walls and more of the strange musty smell—but Mr. Paragal did not like the room.

He closed the door. Turning, he went to the stairway. "This will do," he decided—aloud.

He laid one hand on the bannister, jerked, and six or eight feet of it came crashing to the floor. The crash echoed through the house. . . .

A start jerked Mr. Paragal. His flinty face tightened, and his little figure stood quite rigid while he listened for the last echo.

He did not like this house. There was something about it—not the cobwebs, not the dirt, nor the smell. There was something *else*.

He dragged the broken end of bannister across the floor, kicked and twisted it into bits, and piled the bits beside the fire.

He lighted a cigarette. He piled more wood on the flames.

And all the time, with some sixth sense, he felt that something *else*. It wasn't the creaks and rustlings and groans, nor the echoes of them. It wasn't the red shine of the fire, nor the shadows.

Nor was it imaginary—it had nothing to do with the fanciful don of Harry Janifer's story.

Very intangible, it was, very secret and unknowable. Mr. Paragal could not put his finger on it at all, and Mr.

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Paragal was not used to admitting the reality of things he couldn't walk around, feel of, and bite into.

"Bunk!" he said.

And then he decided not to say anything more. His voice had gotten a little shaky, and its sound no longer comforted him. Indeed, it was a frightening voice. . . .

He sat down on the blankets; sat down, but didn't lie down. He threw the last of the faggots on the fire. Then he began throwing on the broken bannister. This burned, to be sure, but it didn't burn cheerfully.

The flames changed, were more green than red. They shrank in size, and cast hardly any light into the room.

It seemed to Mr. Paragal that this fire was like a strange green beast hunkered on the hearth, gnawing the wood, licking the wood with its sharp green tongue. It made the sound of gnawing and licking. It made sounds like a wild beast cracking bones.

Mr. Paragal wet his lips, and his eyes grew wide as eyes could grow, and his ears kept straining and listening to the sounds of the fire and other sounds in the house.

It was very warm in the room. The skin on his face and hands felt quite toasted. But underneath, the flesh stayed queerly cold. . . .

MR. PARAGAL was afraid. He had a good large notion to go out of the door, say the hell with it, and pay Harry Janifer his bet.

But also he had another and a stronger notion. There was a stubborn streak in Mr. Paragal—stubborn and proud. In fact, he took pride in being a skeptic. He didn't really give a damn for the bet, so far as the money went, but he knew that his reputation as a show-me guy hung in the balance.

Stubbornness proved stronger than fear. Pride kept him listening for a noise that he knew could not be heard, kept his eyes straining for a sight that could not be seen.

Presently he looked at his watch. The hands showed midnight. A little hard knot tightened in the pit of his stomach, and he hastily stirred the fire. Yet common sense told him that midnight was just like any other hour.

All the same, he piled the rest of the bannister on the fire. Then he tiptoed to the stairs. He stretched a hand up, but could not quite reach the place where the bannister had broken off.

Mr. Paragal looked around the room undecidedly, looked up the stairs. Somewhere the house groaned. He stared around hastily, and the fire opened its green mouth and seemed to laugh.

He started up the stairs. As he did so, another sound came from the hall over his head. A *footstep?*

Mr. Paragal's heart thudded heavily in his chest, and his fingers knit into nervous fists. But he knew it could not be a footstep! He climbed a little higher, and the stairs cried out under his weight. But what was that *other* sound? Just like some one breathing! *Breathing!*

Mr. Paragal was of a great mind to get off the stairs and out through the door. He bit his lip, and stared up the steps. It was a longish stairway, and the rest of the bannister promised enough wood to last out the night. He might as well take it all.

But he would have to take it all *now.* For he knew that he wasn't coming up these stairs again! That sound of breathing in the upper part of the house had become altogether too realistic.

He gripped the bannister, gave it a trial shake. Instantly came a dying wail from overhead:

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"Whoo-oo-ooo!"

Mr. Paragal staggered, and then stiffened. The corners of his mouth twitched, and his breath seemed to sink claws into his throat. He flung a terrified glance up the stairs.

"Whoo-hhoo-hoo!"

Mr. Paragal's bulging eyes glimpsed a shadowy apparition looming up at the other, upper end of the bannister. It wore a curious kind of wide-brimmed pancake hat. Then Paragal's blood chilled, for under the brim was what looked very much like a death's head—a faintly luminous skull with grinning teeth and staring eye sockets.

The figure also wore a short jacket, a sash, and what might have been pantaloons; but Mr. Paragal did not investigate these details closely.

With a sob he tore the flashlight from his pocket, aimed it up the stairs, and pressed the switch.

There came a shriek of devilish laughter! A sword flashed into the electric beam. Something flew off the tip of the sword and came bouncing and thumping down the steps. The something was round, and had a lot of flying back hair, and as it tumbled down the stairs it bled and spurted red onto the steps!

A blurted cry tore Paragal's lips. His fingers froze on the flashlight. His hands went rigid with terror.

The thing turned over and over as it rolled toward him. He glimpsed pallid cheeks and wide-open, glassy eyes. Its neck was a gory stump.

Mr. Paragal sprang wildly aside. The bannister snapped and buckled under his weight. He gave a scream, threw out his arms, and pitched into mid-air.

The next moment his flying body collided violently with the floor.

It knocked the wind out of him. It stunned him, for he had fallen head-and-shoulder first. For an instant his senses spun wildly in black void.

HE opened his eyes. He was about to spring to his feet and throw himself out the door when he saw the ghost standing directly over him.

In the green glow of the fire, the shadowy figure took a vastly more definite shape. It looked very substantial and fleshy. The death's head no longer shone luminously. It was merely painted on a cheesecloth mask. Looking up from the floor, Mr. Paragal could see a round, pale face behind the cheesecloth.

Mr. Paragal choked a sickly laugh of relief. The don was only Joe Beetle, the sword a mere property blade.

Now Joe whirled around, ran across the room, and wrenched open the door.

Feeling none the worse for his experience—physically, that is—Mr. Paragal clambered to his feet and also went to the door.

The truck was parked about a hundred yards down the hill, and by its lights Paragal saw Joe Beetle flying along the road, waving his arms, and shouting:

"Harry! Janifer!"

Mr. Paragal saw something more—a ladder propped up to the wall, reaching to a second story window. It explained how the ghost had entered the house. And it also explained the true nature of the footsteps and breathing Paragal had heard.

Smiling a bitter superior smile, Mr. Paragal swung around to stare at the head which had bounced down the stair.

It was merely a doll's head. He had often seen such things in shop windows—as large as real babies, with natural hair, and something inside them that cried *"Maa-ma-a!"* when you squeezed

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them. The hollow head, made of some unbreakable composition, had been filled with catsup.

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Paragal.

As he stood there, wagging his head in self-disgust, he heard the truck come to growling life.

And now a hot blush of mingled shame and anger suffused his being. He jerked around and glared through the open door. The twin eyes of the truck seemed to widen with laughter as they neared him. He knew the men behind those headlamps were laughing their fool heads off—at him!

Paragal winced, and his head hung sadly. They would have him the laughing stock of the film colony. In every taproom, at the Troc and the Brown Derby, in the palatial offices and the more palatial dressing rooms, they would shriek out this story about Paragal—the guy who didn't believe anything he heard, and only half of what he saw—!

Possibly he exaggerated. Possibly he was not quite that famous! But it was very real to him.

Suddenly, though, Mr. Paragal gave a quick little start. His downcast eyes stared at the floor on the porch. It showed only *one* set of foot tracks—Beetle's!

Swift as flame came courage—and a plan. After all, he hadn't broken the terms of the bet. For it was only Joe Beetle's word against his own! All he had to do was to deny that he'd been frightened at all. Say he saw through the whole thing right away. He hadn't left the house. . . .

Mr. Paragal whirled around. He darted at full speed up the stairs. He flung himself into the darkness of the upper hall. He wasn't at all afraid of the house now. Its creaks and rustlings and groans no longer bothered him; indeed, he didn't hear them any more.

QUITE coolly, Mr. Paragal knelt beside the thick top post of the bannister. A smile spread over his face. Janifer and the rest of the gang would rush in after a moment, expecting to find their victim winded and spluttering with fright on the floor.

Well, they would get a very different reception! One that would make Joe Beetle look like the world's prize liar—

He would say that he'd torn down the bannister for fuel—there were pieces of it in the fire to prove that. He'd say that he hadn't even been on the stairs when Beetle showed up! He'd been asleep on his blankets, and only waked up to see Joe Beetle tearing down the steps as if all the imps of hell were after him!

Mr. Paragal chuckled. It would look as if Joe had come in to scare him—and had taken fright himself!

Mr. Paragal nodded contentedly. He felt very cheerful about it all, very comfortable, and light-hearted; almost light-headed. It semed absurd now that he could ever have been afraid of this house.

"Why," thought he, "I wouldn't mind spending the rest of the night here. In fact, I think I will!"

And his smile grew. It was a nice house. He had even begun to feel quite at home in it.

"It could be bought for a song, I suppose. And it *could* be fixed up, I guess," he told himself. "I daresay a thousand dollars'd put it in tiptop shape. And you can't beat the scenery around here."

The idea grew on him that he might really do it. For one thing, it would prove beyond question that he hadn't been frightened—yes, it would refute Joe Beetle completely!

Footfalls rang out, and Mr. Paragal

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popped his head out from behind the banister post and stared down.

Harry Janifer came in first. Behind him was Joe Beetle—an absurd sight in his pancake hat and short jacket. Mr. Paragal wondered how he had ever been taken in for a moment by *that*. Behind Joe Beetle came the make-up expert, responsible, no doubt, for Joe's costume.

The three men passed from Mr. Paragal's sight, moved around the side of the stair. Mr. Paragal drew a long breath, and said:

"Whoo-oo--ooo!"

He half expected them to stampede for the door. But no sound came from below. No doubt they were paralyzed with fear.

So Mr. Paragal started down the steps. He moved quietly, on such light feet that not a creak or groan of the ancient timbers and boards betrayed him. Leaning out over the broken bannister into the greenish glow of the fire, he cried:

"Who-hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo-hooey!"

The three men were right under Mr. Paragal. But they didn't look up when he *who-hoo-hoo'd*; in fact, they acted as if they hadn't even heard him.

Funny. Very funny. It disquieted him. Gave him a queer, lost feeling.

Then he saw that Janifer and Beetle and the make-up chap had their hats off. Bending over something, they were. A limp, quiet, strange something. And they were moving it, picking it up.

Mr. Paragal caught his breath, and a quick, nervous flutter went through him. "Boys!" he said. "Boys! What's that?"

They paid no attention to his voice. But now he saw what it was. The flutter came again, and this time it went straight to his heart. For what Janifer and Beetle and the make-up expert were picking up was a body.

Mr. Paragal gripped the bannister, and stared, and he saw beyond any doubt that this was a dead body. They carried it right past him to the door, and when they turned to go out the door he saw it more clearly. He shrieked:

"Boys!"

For locked in the corpse's hand was a flashlight. And the face—hanging queerly as if the neck had been broken in a bad fall—was a flinty little face that Mr. Paragal knew well, since he saw it every morning in his shaving mirror. He reeled and fell full length on the stairs. But his falling made no sound, for what the men were carrying out the door was *his body.*

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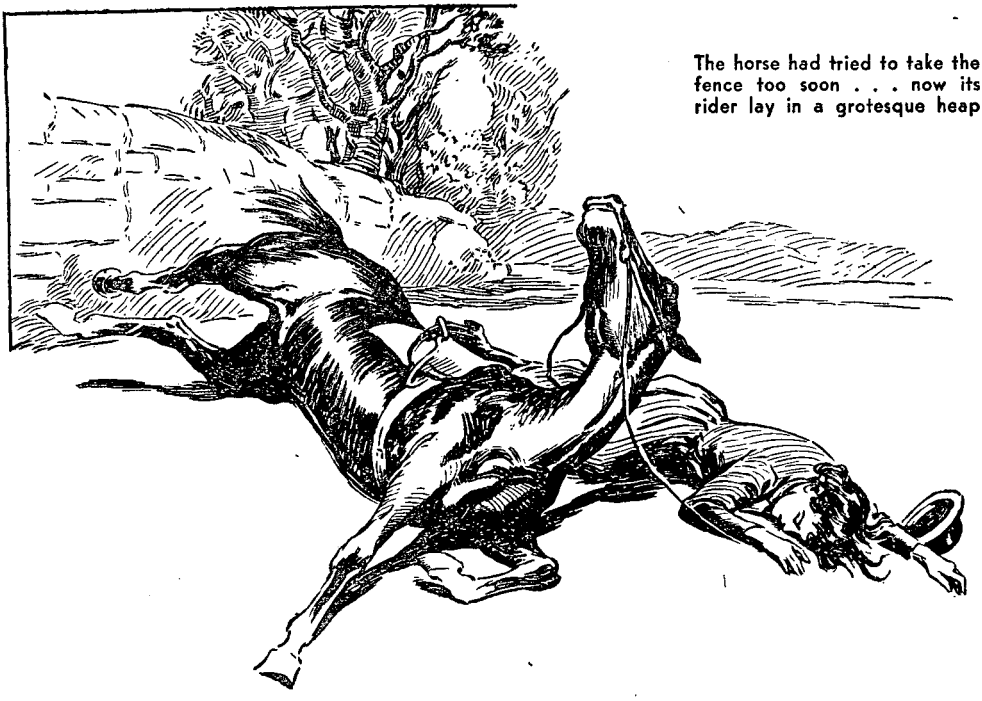

The horse had tried to take the fence too soon . . . now its rider lay in a grotesque heap

Grand National

By JUDSON P. PHILIPS

Author of "Last Hour," "Golden Gloves," etc.

HALF a million dollars is a fantastic amount to wager on a horse race—even the Grand National. But when Lucky Jadwin made the bet, he was too angry to be sensible . . .

Lucky Jadwin started life as a cowhand. A freak oil gusher put his foot on the first rung of the ladder, and his luck had done the rest. He made more millions than it was entirely comfortable to think about . . . even if he didn't always hang on to them. Lucky was, all in all, a pretty fabulous fellow.

In March, 1927, he was in England with his young son Philip, determined that his chestnut mare, Bright Princess, would fulfill for him a lifetime ambition and make him the owner of Grand National winner. But Bright Princess was killed in the race —spiked through the belly by a jagged bit of broken fence. That broke young Philip's heart and filled him with a great hatred for racing. But Lucky didn't know about that. Or care. He was too worried that what had happened to the Princess had broken his luck. And what would Lucky Jadwin be without it?

So that night at dinner he was in no mood for Sir Humphrey Tarrant's poisoned gibing. Stung, he wagered five hundred thousand dollars that within ten years, he *would* own the winner of the Grand National. Sir Humphrey accepted, pledging his Huntingdonshire estates against Lucky's cash, deposited in a London bank. In the event that either of them should die before the ten years were up, their sons were to carry on. . . .

This story began in the Argosy for May 1

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A LITTLE less than nine years later, Lucky Jadwin dies of heart failure, still trying to win that bet. Most of his fortune was swept away in the Black October of 1929, and his only legacies to his son Philip are debts—and the fantastic wager.

Philip declares firmly that he will not attempt to win it. Horse racing—particularly steeplechasing—is not for him. He loves the horse—and not the victory. There will be an auction of his father's stable and remaining possessions. Guy Tarrant offers to pay enough money to cover Lucky's debts if Philip will promise to forfeit the wager.

Guy Tarrant is like his father—arrogant, and cool as ice, and he has the same goading sting to his words that drove Lucky into the rash compact nine years before. Philip hates him on sight.

AT the auction, to please Dan Shane, Lucky's old trainer, Philip spends most of his small capital to buy Gray Dawn—otherwise known as "Bad Bill"—a splendid stallion who goes for a low price because of a bad bruise on his silvery nose. Dan takes the animal and trains him, although Philip Jadwin still insists he will not enter him in any steeplechase, and particularly not the Grand National.

Philip begins to change his mind though. Lunching one day with Connie Heath, whom Philip will not marry because he's too poor and she's too rich, and Tony Brent, a publisher who wants Philip to do Lucky's biography, he happens to overhear Guy Tarrant remark that Philip had come to him to beg off the wager. To a man of Philip's temper, there are just two things to be done. And he does both. First he knocks Guy down, and second, he announces that his agreement with Tarrant is off.

WHEN Philip and Connie go to visit Shane and Gray Dawn, Shane reports that a stranger whom Dan does not like the *feel* of has been nosing around, spying, asking questions. Philip goes for a trial canter on Gray Dawn and sees the man Shane has described watching from a hillside.

Philip rides him down and grabs him. It is the man Guy Tarrant was lunching with the day that Philip knocked Guy down. Tarrant, the man says, has sent him up to see what Gray Dawn is like, to try and buy him if he's any good.

"It would be an awful headache for the Tarrants if you were to enter a horse with a real chance in one of the next two Grand Nationals, you see," the man explains.

Philip strokes the big gray's nose meditatively and a curious glint comes into his eyes. "So it would," he murmurs. "So it would! . . ."

CHAPTER VI

ONE FOR MR. SHANE

THE moment Philip released his grip on the stranger's collar the man made tracks for the fence that bordered the highway. Philip stood where he was, absently stroking the big gray horse's neck. He saw the man clamber into a car and drive off. Then he realized that Danny and Connie were running across the field toward him. Slowly he turned to greet them as they came up. Old Danny was out of breath.

"What is it, Mr. Philip? What did he want?" he panted.

There was still a grim set to Philip's jaw. He laughed—a short, mirthless laugh. "Your horse has a friend of mine worried, Danny," he said, dryly.

Connie Heath gave him a quick, questioning glance. "Tarrant?"

"Go to the head of the class," said Philip. "Mr. Tarrant wants to know if I own this horse, if he's any good, and if I plan to enter him in the Grand National. Our slimy friend implied that Mr. Tarrant wouldn't be very happy if I had such an idea in mind."

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Old Danny looked eagerly at Philip. "A little schooling, Mr. Philip—a little experience in competition—and Bill'll give 'em all a run for their money."

"A very pleasant pipe dream, Danny," said Philip. He turned to look at the big gray. "All the same, it would be fun to throw a scare into 'em, eh, fella?"

Old Danny and the girl exchanged a quick glance, and then Danny said, quite casually, "You'll ride him in, Mr. Philip?"

Philip was frowning. "Yes, I'll ride him in." Philip mounted the gray and rode off. But he took no jumps on the way in. That outward ride had stirred something in him that he wanted to forget—something that he had very studiously schooled himself to forget in the last few years. The sweep and dash of that outward ride had brought it all back . . . the joy of sitting astride a great horse; the joy of taking fences in a surge across the countryside; the deep-seated competitive urge that he had inherited from Lucky. He had put all thoughts of the bet, of the possibility of ever competing in the Grand National far behind him. It had been easy because there was no horse—nor any chance of his affording to buy a horse. Yet here, carrying him slowly back across the meadows to Danny's barn, was a horse—a horse that *might* have a chance—a horse that he could possibly consider was his. And on top of that—Tarrant!

Tarrant with his cool, crisp speech and his mocking, icy eyes.

A little hot flame of fury burned in him. Tarrant—so like his father whom Lucky had hated. Tarrant—whom he hated himself. Money was important—money meant he could go on with the kind of life he had always lived. But the urge for money was far weaker than the sudden urge to carry on and win the bet that had been Lucky's dream till his dying day.

No, he must step hard on any such thoughts. It would take thousands of dollars to prepare the horse for a chance—and in the end it might turn out that Bad Bill really didn't have the stuff for the grueling race at Aintree. And if he did show promise, it would cost thousands more to ship him to Europe, train him and acclimate him before the race there. There was no such amount of money available to Philip. It was impossible—utterly and hopelessly impossible.

"I've got to forget it, Bill," he said softly to the horse. "I've got to *forget it!*"

HE REACHED the stable a moment or two before Danny and dismounted. He loosened the saddle girth and stood beside the horse, rubbing the broad gray forehead until Danny and Connie came across the yard.

When Danny had put the horse away they all went into the house where Mrs. Weston, Danny's sister, had prepared hot coffee and doughnuts for them. There was a curious tension in the air. Philip was unusually silent, and Danny and Connie kept watching him, glancing at each other.

"What do you really think of him, Mr. Philip?" Danny asked finally.

Philip drew a deep breath. "He acts like a great horse, Danny," he said slowly. "He's strong, and fast, and he has a swell disposition, and he can jump like a fool. You ought to be able to get a good price for him."

Danny looked over the brim of his coffee cup. "Well, sir, here's how it is," he said slowly. "The horse ain't rightfully mine till I can pay for him—and

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there's no use talkin'," he went on hastily, forestalling Philip's objection, "I figger he's yours until I *can* pay for him."

"That's nonsense, Danny. I bought him for you—I *gave* him to you!"

Danny put down his cup so sharply it rattled in the saucer. "Look here, Mr. Philip! Here's the real lowdown on that horse. For nine years I worked with your father tryin' to find a horse that had a chance. It meant everythin' to him. Well, I picked out Bill—bought him for your father. Winnin' that Grand National is all I've et and slept for nine years—winnin' it for the Jadwins! Bill has a chance—a great chance, if we bring him along right! You've got to try it, Mr. Philip. You ain't going to let 'em take your father's money without even tryin' for it—when you've got a horse that might win. Lord, Mr. Philip, I don't want to make money off this horse. But I just got to see him *win!*"

Philip's fingers were not quite steady as he held a match to his cigarette. "I know how you feel, Danny," he said. "I feel something like it myself. But it's simply impossible. I haven't the money or the time to train him. I haven't the money to take him to England. It's too bad. I'd give a great deal to have a shot at that race—just to keep Tarrant on the anxious seat! But it's no cigar. It can't be done."

"You could swing it somehow, Mr. Philip," said Danny, stubbornly. "With a million bucks in the pot somebody'd finance you, as a gamble."

"First we'd have to prove the horse was worth the gamble," said Philip. "That means training—entering him in races in this country. I couldn't swing it."

"Jasper would help you," Connie said, eagerly. And then she bit her lip. That had been wrong. Philip was so stubbornly proud about things.

"I couldn't ask your father to risk money on such a long shot, Connie," he said. "No, it's a nice idea. It's fun to think about it. But it's impossible."

"But Philip . . .!"

"Please," said Philip, almost harshly. "I'm just as keen about the idea as you two are. I'm sold on the horse. But there simply isn't any way. Let's talk about something else."

FOR the next ten days after his visit to Danny, Philip stuck grimly to the task of getting Lucky's biography under way for Tony Brent. From time to time he found himself sitting in front of the typewriter, staring vacantly at the page in front of him, his mind centered on a big gray horse with an ugly bump on his nose.

It was hard for Philip to forget those few moments of exhilaration when he and Bad Bill had swept around the first half of Danny's little jumping course. It was hard for him to keep from dreaming a fantastic dream—a dream of himself, wearing Lucky's old purple and gold collars, sweeping around the rain-swept course at Antree with a pack at his heels. When this picture became too absorbing, he would force himself back to the task that confronted him. But the vision persisted—a vision that ended with a satisfying picture of himself collecting the bet from Sir Humphrey and Guy Tarrant.

On the tenth day came a letter which shattered any measure of composure which Philip had managed to attain for himself. It was from the secretary of the Fairview Hunt Club. Lucky Jadwin had been one of the founders of the Fairview Hunt and he had been made a life member. Since Lucky never rode himself the membership had been

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transferred to Philip years before. The letter read as follows:

MY DEAR PHILIP:

I was delighted to discover that you had entered a horse in our hunter trials to be run over the old course here next week. To be quite frank, I had no idea that you still had any horses, which explains my failure to send you an entry form. I was more than pleased when I learned that you had applied for one and entered your horse.

I know that a host of your old friends will be keen to see you again and to learn that you still keep up your interest in the organization.

We expect a big turnout—some of the best hunters in this section of the country have been entered. May I personally wish you the best of luck and tell you that I am looking forward to seeing you again?

Very sincerely yours,
JOHN C. FINCH,
Sec'y Fairview Hunt Club.

Philip read the letter three times, his brain spinning. He had entered no horse in the Fairview Hunter Trials! He had applied for no entry blanks! What the devil was Johnny Finch talking about?

Philip jammed on his hat and went down to the corner cigar store to telephone. A few minutes later he was connected with the Fairview Club. Finch wasn't there but he talked to one of the stenographers. Yes, Mr. Jadwin's horse had been entered.

"I wanted to make certain you had the correct name for him," said Philip, in a dazed voice.

"I have the lists right here, Mr. Jadwin. Hold on a minute." And then, "Your horse is listed under the name of Gray Dawn, Mr. Jadwin. Is that correct?"

Philip's mouth was set in a hard straight line when he hung up. Gray Dawn, he remembered, was the registered name of Bad Bill. Philip called Connie Heath.

"Listen," he said, when Connie answered. "I don't know what you and Danny are trying to put over, but it's no soap! Do you understand that? *It's no soap!*"

"The man's escaped his keeper," said Connie dryly. "Would you mind telling me just what's eating you, my fine friend? What are Danny and I supposed to have done?"

"You know darned well what I'm talking about!" Philip stormed. "What gray horse is entered in the Fairview Hunter Trials in my name? I won't have it, Connie. If you and Danny think you're going to—"

"Hold everything, darling," said Connie, laughing. "I haven't the foggiest notion about this. I haven't seen or heard from Danny since the day we were out there. If he's pulled a fast one on you—well, perhaps you ought to see him. I'll drive around in fifteen minutes and pick you up."

"I'm not going anywhere," said Philip. "I've got to work!"

"In fifteen minutes," said Connie, placidly. And Philip heard the receiver click at the other end.

"Damn!" said Philip, with feeling.

SOME two hours later Connie's yellow Packard pulled into the yard of Danny's little farm in Connecticut. Mrs. Weston informed them that Danny was somewhere around the barn, and Philip set off to find him, with Connie at his heels.

As they approached the barn they heard the sound of hammering. Danny was not in the barn so they went around behind the building where they found him busily hammering away at some sort of contraption built on top of a pair of old automobile wheels.

There was a guilty look on Danny's face as he saw Philip. He made a vague little gesture of greeting; pointed

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to some nails he was holding between his teeth, as if to explain that he couldn't talk, and went on with his work. Connie had to turn away to keep from laughing at Danny's "caught stealing jam" manner. But Philip wasn't amused.

"Look here, Danny," he said angrily, "you have no business entering that horse of yours in any hunter trials in *my* name. Just what do you think you're doing?"

Rather deliberately Danny removed the nails from his mouth and looked at Philip with wide, innocent eyes. "Doing, Mr. Philip? Why this here," he said, waving at the thing he was building, "is gonna be a sort of trailer-horse truck. I took these wheels off of an old Ford we had hangin' around and I figgered I could build somethin' to truck Bill around on pretty cheap. You see, I made inquiries with the truckin' people about how much it would cost to truck him to and from Fairview and the cheapest rate I could get was fifty bucks for the roun' trip. This here will cost less'n ten bucks to build, an' we can use it right along—takin' the horse to meets and things. And I—"

"Damn it, Danny," Philip interrupted, "you know perfectly well what I'm asking you! Why did you enter Bill in my name at the Fairview trials?"

Danny put down his hammer and reached in his pocket for his pipe and a tin of tobacco. "Well, Mr. Philip," he said blandly, "since you absolutely refuse to think of enterin' Bill in races with the idea of seein' whether he'd be worth tryin' at Aintree—and since you insist that he belongs to me—and since you insist that I ought to sell him and get a good price—"

"Stop stalling, Danny!"

Danny struck a match and held it to his pipe with maddening slowness. "Well, sir, I figgered I'd get a better price for him if I had a chance to show him in action. I ain't got the fee to enter him in no events and I remembered you was a life member at Fairview and could enter him in the trials free of charge. So I took the liberty—"

"Who's going to ride him?"

"Well, sir," said Danny, studiously avoiding Philip's eyes, "I figgered maybe you would. I can't afford to hire no professional rider—and you've been so kind up to now I figgered maybe you wouldn't mind takin' one afternoon off to ride this horse—just to help make it possible to get a good price for him. I know it's askin' a lot, Mr. Philip. But there won't be no cost to you. And—and I thought maybe Miss Connie wouldn't mind drawin' this trailer over to Fairview on the back of her car, on account of I can't afford to *hire* someone to—"

Very slowly Philip's face relaxed into a smile. "Danny," he said, "you're the damndest scoundrel I've ever met."

"Yes, sir," said Danny, meekly.

"And you had no right to do this!"

"No, sir." Danny looked up slyly at Philip. "But you won't mind doin' just this much for me, so's I can get a better price for him?"

"Yes," said Philip slowly, "I'll ride him for you, Danny. But mind you, it's only so you can show him off to potential buyers."

"Of course, That's all it's tor, Mister Philip," said Danny, grinning.

CHAPTER VII

A TOAST TO TARRANT

"WELL, Glover, speak up, man!" Guy Tarrant spoke with sharp impatience. His dark, aquiline face was

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clouded with anger. The man who confronted him was the man he had sent to spy upon Danny Shane. They were standing near the door of the private sitting room of Tarrant's suite at the Ritz.

Glover glanced anxiously across the room at a girl who sat by the windows, looking out over the roofs of the city.

"Don't be a fool!" Tarrant said, harshly. "You can speak up in front of my sister. She understands the situation thoroughly."

Glover fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette which he extracted from a crumpled package. "Well, Mr. Tarrant, I've real news this time. Jadwin's horse has been entered in the hunter trials to be held at the Fairview Hunt Club next week. Jadwin's to ride himself. I wangled that out of one of the stenographers at the club."

"Hunter trials!" Tarrant exploded. "Now why the devil should he—"

"It's just a guess, Mr. Tarrant," said Glover, "but I think this was kind of put over on Jadwin. That old guy Shane is trying everything he knows to persuade Jadwin to take this horse to Aintree. Jadwin's only ridden the horse once—the day I—"

"The day you stupidly allowed yourself to be caught!" snapped Tarrant.

Glover's lips tightened. "Be that as it may, Mr. Tarrant," he said coldly, "what I'm getting at is this. Shane entered that horse in the trials without Jadwin knowing it—and now he's persuaded Jadwin to ride it in the trials,"

"What possible harm can there be in that?" Tarrant asked. "The trials aren't a race. The horse simply goes over the course, running against the stop watch. Jadwin may only be trying to show him off to buyers."

"He may," said Glover. "In fact I'm inclined to think that's how Shane persuaded him to ride. But Shane has something else at the back of his mind. He wants Jadwin to know how good that horse really is. And when Jadwin finds out . . ." Glover shrugged.

"You're still of the same opinion about the horse?" Tarrant's pale blue eyes looked piercingly at Glover.

"I think he's a potential world-beater," said Glover simply. "I've watched Shane work him out every day. Shane's too old to be much of a rider, but that horse could jump with a corpse on his back. Grays are notoriously tough. This one looks as if he'd never tire. Shane's been taking him around his place in four-mile doses and the horse is still rarin' to go when he gets through. All I can say is—he looks tough! Plenty tough."

TARRANT turned and walked over to a sideboard where he fixed himself a whiskey and soda. As an afterthought he gestured to Glover. "Help yourself."

Tarrant looked over at his sister but she was still staring out the window as though she'd heard none of the conversation. Tarrant drained half his highball at a gulp and turned back to Glover who was splashing soda into his own glass.

"You've looked into Jadwin's finances as I instructed?"

Glover nodded. "He's flat all right. Has almost nothing except an advance from a publisher for writing his father's biography."

"Then he couldn't swing an expedition to Aintree?"

Glover looked almost pityingly at the Englishman. "I'm just a dumb private detective, Mr. Tarrant," he said dryly, "but even I can see the setup here. Jadwin has no dough . . . *now!* He might have trouble raising the amount from

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his friends. But once that horse shows something in public—if he wins a couple of good races here, or even shows well—there'll be a lineup three blocks long waiting to offer to finance Jadwin in return for a good-sized cut of the stakes if he should win at Aintree."

"The whole thing's fantastic," Tarrant said, scowling. "I don't know why we're worrying our bloody heads off! In the first place no American rider has ever won the race. In the second place if the horse was the greatest jumper in the world he'd still be a long shot, taking the sea voyage and all that."

"I'm only being paid to dig up information for you, Mr. Tarrant," said Glover. "You haven't asked my opinion, but just the same I've got a hunch about Jadwin and that horse. For the last eight and a half years old man Jadwin tried to find a winner. He failed. Young Jadwin gave up the idea—and along comes this gray. It's one of those screwy breaks. I've got a hunch that maybe young Jadwin may have struck oil, like his father did forty years ago. If you can't afford to pay off that bet if you lose it—well, I'd make pretty darn certain that Jadwin didn't go to Aintree. That's just the advice of a dumb dick."

Tarrant looked at Glover thoughtfully, blowing a stream of cigarette smoke out through his thin nostrils. Then he glanced at his sister.

"Are you suggesting that we . . .?"

"I'm not suggesting anything, Mr. Tarrant," Glover cut in sharply. "I'm just saying that if you've got a way to persuade Jadwin to give up the Aintree notion for good you'd better go to work. Once he gets wise to the possibilities of that horse it may not be so easy."

Tarrant nodded slowly. Then he put down his glass. "Well, that'll be all for now, Glover. Keep me posted. If you hear that the horse has been entered anywhere else let me know. And keep a close watch on Jadwin. If you get the notion he's trying to raise money anywhere I want to know about it."

"He won't have to hunt for it if that horse goes the way I think he will," said Glover. "Good night."

GUY TARRANT poured himself another drink. It wasn't until he had taken a deep draught of it that his sister turned from the window. Jessica Tarrant had the same dark, violet eyes that had so impressed Philip Jadwin nine years before. Her skin had a delicate ivory texture to it. She bore a resemblance to Guy and her father, but had none of their arrogance of manner. Her voice was low and husky.

"You've made a frightful botch of this business, Guy," she said quietly.

"No need to rub it in," said Tarrant sourly.

"If you hadn't found it necessary to sound your horn like an ass in that public restaurant Philip Jadwin would have signed the release days ago and we'd be on our way home."

"All right!" snarled Tarrant. "I messed it up. But it doesn't help the situation any to be constantly reminded of it. If you haven't any concrete suggestions, Jessica—"

"But I have. Your silly pride got you into this. Perhaps if you humble yourself a bit you can still get out of it. Go to Philip Jadwin, apologize to him, and ask him if he won't renew negotiations with you."

"Apologize?"

"Precisely," said the girl coldly. "After all, father sent you over here to settle things. You know what it means to us if Philip Jadwin should

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happen to win at Aintree. Certainly it's worth eating a bit of humble pie to keep the family from being wiped out."

Tarrant's eyes narrowed. "Look here, Jessica, Jadwin has no more use for me than I have for him. We didn't hit it off as kids. But he liked you. Why don't you go to him, explain the situation to him, and—"

"No!" said Jessica sharply. "This is your mess. You'll have to get out of it yourself."

Tarrant smiled a thin, tight lipped smile. "I'll get out of it," he said. Don't worry about that, Jessica. "I'll get *out of it!*"

OLD Danny Shane talked to the big gray horse in a voice that was almost as soft as the purring of a cat. Danny was carefully bandaging Bill's legs and his tail.

"Why the tail bandage, Danny?" Connie asked. She was leaning against the running board of the big yellow Packard to which Danny's trailer horse-truck had been attached.

"Liable to rub the hair off'n it in the truck," said Danny. "I saved a bit of everythin', miss, from the old Jadwin stables. Got a hood for him and everythin'."

Connie was smoking a cigarette, her eyes narrowed to keep out the smoke. "This is going to mean a lot, Danny," she said. "You see," and her voice had a dry quality to it, "you see, Danny, Philip won't marry me because I have so much money and he has none at all. That's crazy, Danny—that I shouldn't be able to have the man I love just because of the accident that my father has a lot of money and my mother left me a lot!"

"It's pride, miss," said Danny. His gnarled fingers were rubbing vaseline into the bump on Bill's nose. "I don't like pride in horse or man unless they got the stuff to back it up. Well, Mr. Philip has it, miss, and the strength, too. It won't be long before things is straightened out."

"It's Bill that's got to have the stuff if it's to be done quickly," said Connie, looking at the long clean legs of the horse.

"Don't fret none about Bill, miss," said Danny complacently. "Bill'll hold up his end, never you fear. It's just persuadin' Mr. Philip—that's all that's left to be done."

Very gently he fitted the hood over the horse's head—a flannel arrangement that covered the horse's head and ears and had goggle fixtures over the eyes to keep out the dust of the road. Many horses make a fuss when the hood is put on them but Bill was perfectly unruffled, fumbling at Danny's fingers with his lips.

"Now, miss, if you're ready, I'll load him onto the truck," said Danny.

"No blanket?" Connie inquired.

"We'll not put it on him at first, miss. They usually fret a bit at the start and that heats 'em up too much if they're wearin' a blanket. After we've gone a ways and he's quieted down, we'll cover him up."

Connie dropped her cigarette and crushed it out under her heel. "Maybe, if we put this over, Danny, I'll know something about horses by the time we get to Aintree."

"That you will, miss. Come Bill, you black son of evil!"

PHILIP JADWIN sat on the porch at the Fairview Club talking with John Finch, the secretary. From time to time he glanced at his watch. Danny and Connie and the horse ought to be along pretty soon. Philip had come

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ahead to make certain there were proper accommodations for Bill.

"I expect we'll have the biggest crowd tomorrow that ever attended a hunter trial in these parts," Finch said.

"How come?" Philip asked. He was wondering if Bill was riding quietly in the makeshift truck. Too bad if he were to bang himself up.

"You're the reason, Philip," laughed Finch. "As soon as we announced you'd entered a horse things began to hum. That old story of your father's bet, you know. Everyone knows you've still got time to compete for it. They think maybe the horse you're bringing here is your candidate—to win a million dollars. Newspaper men, gamblers, people who never saw a trial before—all here to see what kind of horse you've got. What's the lowdown, Philip? Are you really getting this horse ready for Aintree?"

"No," said Philip grimly.

"Not good enough, eh?"

Philip shrugged. "That's something I don't know, Johnny. But I couldn't swing it if he was. I—" He was interrupted by the sight of the low-hung yellow Packard turning in through the club gates. Danny's home-made trailer with an old piece of canvas thrown over the top looked like some sort of covered-wagon relic. Philip vaulted the porch rail and went down to the driveway. He stepped on the running board of the Packard.

"Danny decided to ride with the horse in the trailer," said Connie. "Holding his hand, I guess."

"I've got a place for him in the main barn," said Philip. "Drive straight around back."

A crowd of stable hands and exercise boys were lounging around the stable as Connie drew Danny's strange conveyance to the entrance. Philip frowned. He saw men coming toward the barn, from the exercise ring, from the club house, from all over the grounds.

"The public seems interested in your horse, my fine fellow," drawled Connie. She got out of the car.

Philip was letting down the tailboard of the trailer. Old Danny was unfastening the gray who stood back into the truck.

"Rode like an angel, he did, Mr. Philip," said Danny.

And Bill came down out of the truck as cool as a cucumber. He held his head down while Danny unfastened the hood and slipped it off. At sight of Philip the horse reached out and nuzzled at his shoulder.

"I've arranged for a box stall at the end of this row," said Philip, indicating a line of stalls. And then he realized that they were literally hemmed in by the little group of spectators. Connors, the head stableman, nodded to Philip.

"Nice looking animal, sir. Fine sloping shoulders for a jumper. Good quarters. Straight pasterns. Too bad that lump's on his nose."

"He'll do no jumpin' on his nose, Mike Connors," said Danny testily. "If you'll stop gawpin' and show me where we're to keep him . . ."

"You ain't changed a mite, Danny," laughed Connors. "Bring him over this way."

"Would you buy a girl a drink, Mr. Jadwin?" asked Connie. "I find truck driving rather wearing."

"Sorry, darling," said Philip. "I'm afraid I was a little more worried about the horse than I was about you. We'll trot in to the bar."

ARM in arm they crossed the lawn toward the club house. Philip realized that he was very happy. The

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prospect of the trials tomorrow was exciting. Being here in the country, with Connie, in this place where horses were the center of all interest, made it possible for him to forget, temporarily, his problems.

They climbed the club house steps together and went through the big Colonial doorway into the bar beyond. It was practically deserted.

"Nearly everybody's out having a whirl at the course for tomorrow's trials," Philip explained to Connie.

"You taking Bill around later?" Connie asked.

Philip shook his head. "Not on top of the trip. I walked all around the course this morning and I know about all there is to know about the jumps. I'll chance his going all right without having a practice run. Often they go better the first time around than after they've seen what they're up against."

The bartender prepared a couple of whiskys and soda and Philip was just lifting his glass to his lips when someone else came into the bar. At sight of the newcomer Philip put down his glass abruptly.

It was Guy Tarrant. Tarrant came directly toward him. He was smiling—or rather attempting to—pleasantly.

"You'll forgive me, Jadwin, if I intrude for a moment?" He looked expectantly at Connie.

For a second Philip hesitated. Then he said, grudgingly, "Connie, may I present Mr. Guy Tarrant? Mr. Tarrant . . . Miss Heath."

"Great pleasure," said Tarrant, in his clipped, British voice. "I'm afraid Miss Heath saw me before under rather unpleasant circumstances. I made an ass of myself that day, Jadwin. Unforgivable, the whole thing. Wanted to tell you so. Glad to have the opportunity to apologize to Miss Heath for spoiling her luncheon. Here's my hand on it, Jadwin."

Tarrant held out his hand, but Philip very deliberately paid no attention to it. He turned back to the bar and picked up his drink. "I accept your apology, Tarrant," he said coldly. "And that is—ah—that, I should say."

"Very decent of you, old chap," said Tarrant, but he was flushing darkly and his hand was jammed into the pocket of his coat. "Hoped we might let bygones be bygones and take up our negotiations where we left off. The situation's still the same, you know."

"I wonder if it is!" said Philip, softly.

"Of course it is. You need money. We need money. By dissolving the silly bet our fathers made we'll both get what we want. I'll raise the ante if you say so."

Philip turned very deliberately and faced the Englishman. His eyes had a cold glitter in them that Connie had never seen before.

"Of course you know, Tarrant, that I'm entering a horse in the trials tomorrow. As a matter of fact, you know more about that horse than I do—if your friend makes reports that are any good at all. It couldn't be that you're a little nervous, could it, Tarrant?"

Tarrant's eyes blazed anger. "Jadwin, I've tried to do the decent thing. You won't have it. Very well. But I think the time will come when you'll regret having taken this high-handed manner—regret it very much indeed."

"That wouldn't be a threat, would it, Tarrant?" asked Philip. "Because if it is, I shall have to throw you out of here on your ear! I should regret that because the House Committee is rather opposed to brawling in the clubhouse. Now trot along, little man. After the trials tomorrow you may have a notion

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of just how worried you ought to be."

Tarrant stood where he was for an instant, breathing hard. Then he turned on his heel and walked out. Philip watched him go, and then a sardonic smile flickered on his lips.

"By the Lord, if that guy hung around me very often I'd be tempted to take a shot at that damned bet—just to see him squirm!"

"Then here's hoping we see a lot of Mr. Tarrant," said Connie, lifting her glass.

CHAPTER VIII

A HORSE IN A MILLION

THERE was an atmosphere of intense excitement at the Fairview Club, and before the evening was over Connie realized that Philip was the center of it. She and Philip dined at the club, but they scarcely could eat two consecutive mouthfuls of food without an interruption. It seemed as if everybody in the club wanted to speak to Philip. In the end they all wanted the same information. Was this horse Philip had entered in the trials one he planned taking to Aintree? Almost everyone wished him luck.

By the time dinner was over, Philip was getting pretty angry. Apparently all the New York papers had revived the old story of the bet. It was good copy. A penniless young man—a mystery horse—and more than a million dollars at stake, for the purse for the winner at Aintree would be fifty thousand or more. Here was romance and color; here was the old Horatio Alger formula stepped up to high-powered reality.

Philip was angry, but Connie sensed something different about him—something she hadn't felt before. Philip had been definite ten days ago in his refusal to consider the possibilities of Aintree. But he was thinking about it now; thinking hard.

They went for a ride in Connie's car after dinner because there was no chance of peace anywhere in the clubhouse. Connie headed the yellow roadster out of the clubhouse driveway and straight across the main highway. Up a little winding road she drove to the top of a hill, and there she parked the car and turned off the motor. Around the bottom of this hill stretched the course over which the trials would be run tomorrow—two miles of rail fences, stone walls, brush, and water jumps. Tomorrow this hill would be alive with people, churning madly about, running from one vantage point to another to watch the progress of a favorite.

Tonight it was still and quiet. Off to the left Connie could see the moon glittering in the rippling surface of the brook that formed one of the water jumps.

Philip sat slumped in the seat of the car, his teeth clamped on the stem of his pipe. Suddenly he pointed down at a stretch of stone wall.

"That's the only one I worry about," he said. "Plenty of 'em will come a cropper there tomorrow. It's only the third jump—horses won't be properly warmed up. It's an uphill take-off, and half of 'em will try for it too soon." Then he was silent.

Connie, watching him, knew he was troubled. He had fought so hard against the urge to go out after this bet of his father's—the urge to mortgage himself still further in the remote hope of winning. He had made up his mind—and then had come a gray horse . . . and Guy Tarrant!

"I hope you win tomorrow, Philip," she said quietly. "I hope you win glori-

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ously, or fail miserably. I want you to be sure of Bill, one way or the other."

"One thing's certain," he said, with a short laugh. "We *can't* win! You see, Connie, it's not like a race. Each horse runs by himself. They send 'em out at about five minute intervals. Of course performance counts. And *time* counts. But after it's all over they take the leading performers in the ring and judge 'em on conformation. Bill doesn't stand a chance with that nose of his."

"But you'll know yourself about his jumping."

"Yes, I'll know," said Philip.

"And if he stands the test—what then, Philip?"

Philip stirred restlessly. "So help me, I don't know, Connie. I've got an insane urge to go through with it. Old Sir Humphrey Tarrant made Lucky see red. Guy does the same thing to me. But I simply can't ask any one to stake me, even if they gamble on a big slice of the winnings. The Grand National is too damned uncertain. Horses don't run on form there. Hell, look at the race in 1928."

"I'm afraid I'm not up on steeplechase history," said Connie.

"There were forty-two starters that year at Aintree," said Philip. "A horse named Tipperary Tim was the winner. Because he was the only one of the forty-two to *finish!* That'll give you a notion about Aintree. The odds are too long to ask anybody to gamble on me or my horse."

"But if you had the money yourself —you'd go through with it?"

"Like a shot!" said Philip sharply. "If Bill's the horse Danny thinks he is —like a shot!"

PRETTY nearly ten thousand people turned out the next day, and almost all of them were primarily interested in knowing the answer to the question that raged in Philip's mind: Had Philip Jadwin found a horse that stood a chance at Aintree? They swarmed over the hillside like ants. Cars parked for nearly a mile in two directions along the main highway. It was a colorful picture.

Judges rode about the course on horseback. Colored pennants on tall white poles fluttered in the breeze. Over fifty horses were to compete, and starting them at five minute intervals and counting on delays and mishaps it would take five or six hours to run off the event. Riders had drawn their starting time by lot, and Philip had drawn number thirty-six, which meant that Bad Bill wouldn't go to the starting point for three hours or more.

The first horse was to start at eleven in the morning, which meant that Philip would take his turn about two in the afternoon. He refused to go out to the course to see any of the preliminary contestants.

"Makes me nervous to watch the other fellows ride the layout," he said. Connie realized that he was already tense, his nerves drawn fine. Danny hopped around the stable, hovering over the gray horse like a hen with chicks, rubbing his legs, grooming him, talking to him. A constantly changing crowd gathered around the stall to have a look at Bill, who seemed to be the least nervous of all of them.

AROUND noon Connie went out to the course. From a place at the top of the hill she got a pretty good view of things. A little over two miles — fourteen jumps. It was not level going. The course was laid out to simulate typical hunt country. She hadn't been there for five minutes before she saw a horse take a bad fall at the stone wall Philip had pointed out the night

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before. The horse took off too soon and landed squarely in the middle of the fence. A girl was riding and she took a header into a rock pile and lay in a grotesquely motionless heap. From somewhere came the clanging of an ambulance bell.

The next horse was held up at the starting point until the horse and rider had been cleared off the course. Connie's knees felt weak and she sat down on a rock. She didn't want to see any more. She suddenly realized that she didn't want to see Philip ride—and yet she must. If the gray horse failed . . . well, it meant too much to think about. And yet he was just a horse. He couldn't know how much depended on him. He couldn't give any more than his best. He had looked so awfully good back there on Danny's farm . . . but this was something far different. It was on a course a hundred times harder—and the pressure was on!

A little before two Connie went back to the stable. Bad Bill was already saddled and Danny was leading him quietly up and down in the stable yard. Philip sat on an upturned nail keg, smoking one cigarette after another. Connie saw that he was a little pale under the tan of his cheeks. There was a strained look at the corners of his eyes.

"Hello!" he said, striving to sound casual. "I thought you'd run out on us."

"I've been looking over the opposition," said Connie, with an equally forced attempt at casualness.

"How are we doing?" said Philip, lighting a fresh cigarette from the stub of one he'd just finished.

Connie was over beside him and suddenly she gripped his arm in her fingers. "I—I don't want to watch you ride, Philip," she faltered.

"Nonsense," he said gruffly. "I've got to have somebody there I can count on to tell me about Bill. You can see a lot of things from the ground that you can't tell about when you're riding."

"But I'm scared, Philip!" she said, moistening dry lips. "Suppose Bill doesn't come through? Suppose . . ."

"Look at him!" said Philip. "If he doesn't, it won't be on account of nerves. Half the horses that go out there to the start are already in a lather. Have a look at our friend."

Bill was walking languidly up and down beside Danny, who was chewing savagely on a straw. The horse seemed completely relaxed. He paid no attention to the men and horses that scurried about the stable yard.

"I'll swear he looks bored!" said Philip. Then he glanced at his watch and drew a deep breath. "We're due to start in ten minutes. You can lead him over to the start, Danny."

"Right, Mr. Philip."

"Walk over with me?" Philip asked Connie.

"I'm going back to the hill, Philip—to watch!"

"Thought you didn't want to?"

"I don't," said Connie, "but wild horses couldn't keep me away." And then she slipped her hand into his. "Good luck, darling. Oh, *very* good luck."

THE starting line of the course was fenced off like a paddock. The starter, with an orange flag, the official timekeepers, and a couple of judges were in the enclosure. A crowd, packed densely around the fence, watched Danny lead the gray horse through the gate. There were still two horses to go before Philip's turn. Danny took the cooler off Bill and Philip mounted. He wanted to limber up a bit before the start.

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There was a buzz of excitement along the rail as Bad Bill jogged along nonchalantly up and down the turf. Philip was watching the starters ahead of him. A fine-looking chestnut mare with a scarlet-coated rider broke away at a hard run as the starter brought down his flag. One more to go—and then the big test.

The horse to run in front of Philip was a big black, almost seventeen hands high. He was already flecked with lather and his eyes were rimmed with white. When his turn came his rider spurred him sharply, he reared, and then raced at a dead gallop for the first rail fence which was about a hundred yards away. Danny was at Philip's side, his gnarled hand gripping Philip's knee.

"Easy does it, Mr. Philip," he said earnestly. "You ain't racin'. Time don't matter so much to us as seein' if the horse jumps clean. Don't let him tick a single fence if you can help it. And keep him at the middle of the jumps, Mr. Philip."

"Right, Danny." Philip's face was set grimly. But his hand on the gray's neck was relaxed.

"I'm makin' for the hill, sir. I want to see some of this," said Danny. "Good luck, Mr. Philip—but I don't think you'll be needin' luck. He's a grand horse."

"Ready, Mr. Jadwin?" The starter's voice was casual.

"Ready," said Philip, coolly. He trotted his horse over to the center of the course.

The black horse up ahead was racing at that bad stone wall—the third jump. Philip saw him take off awkwardly—saw him strike the top of the fence . . . and horse and rider went down in a heap.

"Sorry. You'll have to wait till the course is cleared," said the starter.

Suddenly Philip realized that his heart was pounding painfully against his ribs. The hours of suspense were telling on him. He felt his hands shaking. But Bill stood calmly at the starting line, looking with mild interest at the people thronging the rail. He was almost too quiet.

"Not much spirit," Philip heard someone say.

The ambulance bell had ceased clanging up ahead. The rider was limping painfully off the course while several of the mounted judges chased the black hunter who was running wild. Presently from up the course came the signal that all was well.

"Ready, Mr. Jadwin?"

"Ready," said Philip, picking up the reins a bit.

The starter raised his flag. *"Go."*

STOP watches clicked. Philip touched Bill with his heels and the gray started. It was no plunging, racing start. The big gray broke into an easy canter across the turf. That first rail fence looked a mile high to Philip, but he knew it was only three foot six—a simple jump. From some deep recess of his memory he remembered a day at Aintree—remembered Danny talking to Bowstrom, his father's jockey. "Many comes to grief on the first fences because they don't take 'em serious enough," Danny had said. Philip was tense—and he realized that his seat was none too good because of that. His mouth was dry—painfully dry.

Bill moved down on the fence at that same easy canter and almost before Philip realized it the gray had taken off and cleared the fence nicely.

Philip knew he hadn't "ridden" that jump. But he knew, too, that with it behind him, his nervousness had gone.

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"Okay, fella," he said, to the horse. "I'm with you now."

Most jumpers will start running hard after they've cleared a fence, but the gray stayed at the same easy canter, never increasing his pace without a signal from his rider. The second fence was a duplicate of the first and Bill took it in his stride. Then came the steady rise in ground toward that murderous stone wall. It was a temptation for every rider to gather pace as he approached it. The gray was going on steadily, so evenly that Philip didn't increase his pace for fear of throwing Bill out of the rhythm of his stride.

"Not too soon, Bill! Not too soon!"

At the last minute Philip gave him a touch of the spur to prevent him taking off too far away. There was no tension in the gray horse. He simply jumped. Philip heard a little gasp from the spectators gathered at the jump—a gasp of admiration, for Bill had cleared this dangerous obstacle by a good eighteen inches. And when he landed he pricked back one ear calmly to listen for instructions. Philip's hand was on his neck and Philip felt a surge of joy. That was the only one that had worried him, and it had been duck soup for Bill.

Up on the hillside Connie found herself beating some innocent bystander on the back. Waiting for Philip and Bill to take that fence had been like a nightmare—and now it was over, so handsomely over, something had popped inside her. The gray was a speck in the distance now as they headed for another stone wall at the far end of the course—then a sweep to the left, and a sharp down grade to a brush jump. Bill's stride hadn't varied a hair from the moment of the take-off. It was deceptive. It looked as if he was going very slowly.

"He can jump," someone said at Connie's elbow, "but he's got no speed. Never do for steeplechase racing."

And then someone had Connie by the arm. It was Danny. "Oh, the beauty! Oh, the beauty!" he said hoarsely. "Did you see him take the first wall, miss? There's been a dozen horses come to grief there today. But not him. Did you ever see a horse jump so cool?"

Connie found herself burbling something unintelligible. Bill had swept over the brush jump and was heading for the water jump—one of the stiffest on the course. Danny's fingers were biting into Connie's arm, but she didn't notice it.

"This one'll tell the story," said Danny. "There's nothing tough ahead."

Bill loped at the jump—and took it as though spanning sixteen feet of jump and water were child's play.

"He can jump all right," said the man at Connie's elbow, grudgingly. "But he's way back in the ruck on time. I clocked him from the start. I'm afraid Jadwin will never have a chance with him in a race. A lot of horses can jump if you take 'em easy."

"Don't worry about speed, mister," Danny said. But the man paid no heed.

SIX jumps left around the south end of the hill and across the finish line. And suddenly the crowd on the hillside began to shout. Clear of the water jump Philip had touched the gray with his heels, and things began to happen. Bill was running now, his great powerful legs churning up clods of the turf, his long neck stretched out, his long white tail streaming out behind him. He was running like a flat racer.

"Easy! Dear God, take it easy!" Danny implored.

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People said afterwards that Bad Bill seemed to fly over jumps. It seemed as if he simply left the ground in stride without any take-off effort. One, two, three, four jumps—at a dead gallop! Where other horses began to slow down after the grind of the course, Bill was turning on the heat. Speed! That crowd had never seen a jumper tear so recklessly at obstacles.

"So he can't *go!*" Danny shouted, pounding the man with the stop watch. And then he grabbed Connie by the wrist and began to run to the other side of the hill so they could see the finish. The whole crowd was sweeping in that direction. If the gray didn't break his neck on the last two jumps and if he could hold this pace it looked like a record for the day. His slow, methodical start was forgotten in this burst of speed.

"Mr. Philip's givin' him the works!" Danny panted. "He wants to see what he can do if he gets the gun!"

They reached the other side of the hill just in time to see Bad Bill take the last jump. He must have cleared it by nearly two feet in a great surging power dive, and then, with Philip up on his neck, he raced out for the finish.

The judge brought down his flag in a sweeping gesture, and everybody was rushing for the timers. Everybody but Connie—Connie who was crying for some silly reason as she ran pell mell across the turf toward Philip and the gray horse. Philip had pulled up the big gray and turned him. Bill was breathing hard, his nostrils distended, but he eyed Connie with his cool, disinterested eyes as she ran up.

"Philip! Oh Philip!"

Philip's eyes were bright with excitement. He wiped a little trickle of sweat from his cheeks. And then he grinned.

"Lord Almighty! What a horse!" he said.

ONE of the timers came across to Philip. "Best time of the day so far, Mr. Jadwin," he said, matter-of-factly. "Take your mount down to the judging ring."

Danny came running up and Philip dismounted. The cooler was thrown over the horse who had already stopped breathing hard.

"Fresh as a daisy!" Danny said ecstatically. "He could have gone another ten miles!"

Philip laughed. The bright, excited look was still in his eyes. "I had to push him, Danny," he said. "I had to know if he got rattled when he was being pushed. I swear I don't believe anything in the world can ruffle him. People waving and shouting at the jumps—he pays no more attention to 'em than if they weren't there."

Bill was taken to the judges' ring where his saddle was removed and the judges looked him over. Finally one of them came over to where Philip was standing.

"It's too bad about that blemish on his nose, Mr. Jadwin. If it wasn't for that he'd take the cup hands down. I'm afraid."

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Gordon," said Philip, still grinning. "I wanted to know if he could really jump. I think I know the answer."

Mr. Gordon rubbed the side of a long aquiline nose with his forefinger. "I don't often go out on the limb about any horse, Jadwin," he said, "but I think that this one is potentially the greatest steeplechaser I ever saw." He looked at Philip, and his lips twisted in a faint smile. "If I were in your boots I'd feel pretty good about that famous bet of your father's."

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"There's many a slip . . .!" said Philip. But he said it lightly. And Connie, looking at him, knew that Philip had made up his mind.

CHAPTER IX

NO DICE

THE papers were full of Philip Jadwin and his horse the next morning. Prominent horsemen expressed themselves as being unqualifiedly impressed with Bad Bill's performance. Philip had ducked away from Fairview immediately after the trial, and the horse in Danny's makeshift trailer had been taken at the same time. No one had had a chance to interview him, but everyone took it for granted that there was no longer any doubt about the future of Bad Bill. He would be a competitor in the Grand National in 1937—barring accident.

Philip and Connie and Danny and Bill had gone straight back to Danny's farm to avoid the crowd and the excitement. The gray rode complacently in the trailer while the others sat jammed together in the roadster—singing! The exhilaration of the horse's triumph had them dizzy with high spirits. They sang, and they talked horse—one particular horse.

"I now appoint myself chairman of the ways and means committee," Connie announced, toward the end of the trip. "The ways and means of raising the money to take Bill to England."

This dampened some of Philip's gaiety. "There's the rub," he said. "And quite a big rub."

"There'll be hundreds of folks waterin' at the mouth for the chance to back you, Mr. Philip," said Danny. "After seein' that horse."

"*And* that rider," said Connie.

"Maybe," said Philip. "But don't forget—that trial was a lot tougher than Danny's back yard . . . but the Grand National! Fifteen to one is good odds on any horse."

Just how anxious people were going to be about backing Philip the three of them didn't realize. In their exuberance they had failed to notice a big touring car pull out of the Fairview club on their heels; had been unaware of the fact that this same car followed them at a discreet distance all the way to Danny's farm.

It was almost dark when they arrived. Bill was promptly unloaded and taken to his warm box stall in the stable. Philip and Connie were just starting for the house when the touring car turned into the yard. There were several men in it, but only one got out. He was a tall, stoop-shouldered man, with a hawklike face and sharp piercing little black eyes. He was smiling as he came up to Philip, but there was something chilling about the smile.

"Mr. Jadwin?"

"Yes," said Philip, rather sharply.

"My name is Carey," said the man. "Walter Carey. I wonder if I can have a little chat with you."

Connie, whose hand was slipped through Philip's arm, felt the muscles of that arm tighten.

"'Speed' Carey, eh?" said Philip.

"Check," said the tall man.

Philip shrugged. "I don't know why I shouldn't talk to you, Carey. This is Miss Heath. This, Connie, is Speed Carey. He owns night clubs. You've probably heard of him."

Connie had. Moreover, she had heard rumors that Carey was one of the big shot racketeers along Broadway. Something about his beady little black eyes made her feel uneasy.

"Come along into the house, Carey,"

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said Philip. "I think Mrs. Weston has some hot coffee waiting for us."

MRS. WESTON was full of questions about the horse. By the time they had settled themselves around her kitchen table and steaming cups of coffee had been poured, Danny had joined them. He gave Carey one look and his forehead clouded in a dark frown. Carey lit a long, thin cigar and leaned back in his chair.

"Your father was an old friend of mine, Jadwin," he said. His voice was not unpleasant, yet it had a queer, sardonic undertone.

"I have heard Lucky express his opinion of you," said Philip dryly.

Carey ignored what was clearly meant as an insult. He waved his cigar in an expansive gesture. "He did me quite a lot of favors," said he, "that I never had a chance to repay. I'd like to make it up to you, if I could."

"I see," said Philip.

"There's no use beating around the bush, Jadwin. I saw your horse jump this afternoon. I happen to know you're broke. I know you haven't the money to take him to England and enter him in the Grand National."

"And you happen to know," said Philip coldly, "that if I got him to England and he won I'd have something over a million dollars in cash in my pocket."

"Precisely," said Carey blandly. "I think you've got something in that horse. I think enough of him to gamble on him. So here's my proposition. I'll give you twenty-five thousand dollars—write my check for it now. That ought to be enough to finance your expedition. If you happen to win the race—well, we split the winnings. If you lose, well, that's my gamble."

"Split the winnings?"

"Oh, not fifty-fifty. Let's say ten to one on my money. If you win you turn over two hundred and fifty grand to me. If you lose, well, you don't owe me anything. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Mr. Philip—" Danny blurted out.

"Shut up, Danny," said Philip, never taking his eyes off Carey's face. Then he said, very coolly, "Goodbye, Mr. Carey."

Carey's little black eyes narrowed. "You don't think that's fair?"

"Eminently fair," said Philip. "But it's no deal. You see, Carey, if it was known that you stood to win two hundred and fifty thousand dollars—"

"It would only be two twenty-five," said Carey quickly. My twenty-five thousand to you would be gone in either case."

"Well, don't worry about it," said Philip, "because I'm not taking it. I was about to say that if it was known that you'd backed me, people would begin to wonder if the race was on the up-and-up. People don't like crooks mixing up in horse racing, Carey."

Carey sat very still for a moment. Then a faint smile twisted one corner of his mouth. "Your success this afternoon seems to have made you a trifle brash, Jadwin. Not many people could say things like that to me and get away with it."

"Sorry if I hurt your feelings," said Philip. "But it's no deal."

Carey got slowly to his feet. His eyes were specks of cold, black ice. "If you change your mind in the next few hours let me know," he said. "And I think it would be a good idea to change your mind."

Philip stood up too. "Carey, I've noticed how awfully stout-hearted a mug like you is when he has a car full of hoods within earshot."

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Carey still smiled, but not with his eyes. "Goodbye, Jadwin. I hope you haven't made a mistake. Because I always liked Lucky. He was smart. Smarter than you seem to be."

CHAPTER X

MONEY FROM HEAVEN

PHILIP and Connie drove back to New York that night. Connie was very much disturbed about Carey. Philip tried to laugh it off.

"He's tough, darling. But they all of 'em try to get by on their reputation. There's nothing he can do about it. And he won't try anything. There's too much spotlight focused on us. If I refuse his proposition—well, that's that. He can't *force* me to accept it."

"I hope he won't try to make trouble."

"Hey! Stop worrying," said Philip. "You're the chairman of the ways and means committee. You're supposed to be thinking of ways and means."

As a matter of fact the ways and means to Aintree developed the next morning before Connie had had a chance to do anything about it. Philip was still asleep when his doorbell rang insistently. He tumbled out of bed, pressed the release button, and then slipped into a dressing gown and lit a cigarette while his callers climbed the flight of stairs.

When he opened the door two men stood there. A young blond chap with a pleasant smile stepped in first.

"Hello, Jadwin. I'm Jimmy Baxter of the *New York Globe*. This is Hennesy, our managing editor."

Hennesy was a thin, worried-looking man who wore steel-rimmed spectacles.

Philip groaned. "Reporters before breakfast! Haven't you guys any hearts?"

Baxter's grin broadened. "We come bearing gifts," he said. "We hope."

"I can't kick anybody out after they've climbed those stairs," said Philip glumly. "Come in. Sit down."

"It's about your horse," said Baxter, appropriating the most comfortable chair and lighting a cigarette.

"You stun me," drawled Philip.

"It's not what you think," chuckled Baxter. "Here's the dope in a nutshell. We understand you are embarrassingly short of the wherewithal to finance a trip to Aintree. Anything to it?"

"It happens to be accurate."

"You are now looking upon a couple of angels," grinned Baxter. "Or rather the representatives of an angel—namely, the *Globe*."

"We're willing to finance you and your horse, Mr. Jadwin," said Hennesy hastily, "for certain considerations."

"Ah," said Philip. "Considerations!"

"Very simple ones," said Baxter. "The *Globe* is to have an exclusive running story of your preparations, and an exclusive story of the race itself. These stories will be signed by you but written by me. I'll toddle along with you."

"The owner," said Hennesy, "was uncertain of just what you would need, but he felt these articles to cover the six months or so before the race, would be worth about twenty-five thousand dollars."

"That's crazy!" said Philip.

"Don't be screwy," Baxter said. "You're the man of the hour—you and your mystery horse that isn't quite such a mystery after yesterday. It's very hot human-interest stuff, Mr. Jadwin. Your exclusive story of the romantic quest for a million bucks is worth money to any paper—big money. You'll earn every cent of it by having to put up with me for six months."

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PHILIP laughed. But he was excited, too. This was perfectly legitimate financing—or so it seemed.

"And I get the money in advance?"

"Spot cash—on signing a contract calling for exclusive rights to your own personal story. Mustn't talk to any other newspaper men."

Philip drew a deep breath. "It seems like a perfectly straightforward proposition, gentlemen. You *would* be getting something for your money—something worth money to you. You see, I've had offers, but they were either from friends who were willing to gamble on getting it back, or from big-hearted lads who wanted a big slice of the winnings, if any."

"Don't worry about the *Globe*," said Baxter. "If they'll pay twenty-five grand for the life history of the latest lady murderer, there's no reason why they shouldn't give as much for a red-hot story like this. We want to get your John Hancock on this contract before some other paper makes you a better offer."

Philip grinned. "The man who has the courage to climb those stairs deserves success. Gentlemen, bring out your contract!"

Hastily Hennesy produced a document from his pocket. It was a simple, straightforward agreement calling for exclusive rights to Philip's own story. After reading it, he signed. His heart was pounding. The die was cast. Aintree lay ahead.

"I don't know if you gentlemen ever drink so early in the morning," he said, "but I think this calls for some kind of celebration. Scotch or Scotch?"

"Scotch," said Baxter solemnly.

Philip got three tumblers and a half empty quart of whiskey. He poured three stiff drinks.

"To Bad Bill!" he said.

At which precise moment Philip's doorbell rang again.

"Thank heaven we've got you signed, sealed and delivered," said Baxter. "Someone else has probably had the same idea!"

It was a soft tread that came up the stair . . . an uncertain tread. Philip went to the door and opened it—and looked in silent amazement at his visitor. A girl stood there—a girl with an extraordinarily pretty face and dark violet eyes. Something about her was familiar, but Philip couldn't place her. He was suddenly conscious of his own appearance—uncomfortably aware that he was rumple-headed and in only pyjamas and bathrobe.

"You *are* Philip Jadwin, aren't you?" asked the girl, in a low, husky voice.

"Yes. I—I seem to remember you, and yet I'm darned if I can recall where we've met, or who you are. I'm afraid I'm being frightfully stupid."

"I'm Jessica Tarrant," said the girl, quietly.

JESSICA TARRANT! Philip had it now. Those deep violet eyes had belonged to an eleven-year-old girl—he had seen her nine years ago—a little girl who looked at him sympathetically as he crouched in the warm straw of the Princess' stall at Aintree.

"Please come in," said Philip. He looked at Baxter and Hennesy meaningly. Baxter took the cue.

"Must be running," he said. "Can you have dinner tonight?"

"Pick me up here at seven," said Philip.

And then he was alone with Jessica Tarrant.

"I'm afraid you'll have to forgive my appearance." He laughed. "Those gentlemen woke me out of a sound sleep. I—well, I hardly know what to

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say, Jessica Tarrant. I haven't seen you since a day nine years ago that was a very tough day for me."

"I remember," she said.

Nothing like her father or brother, Philip thought. Proud but not arrogant. He had liked her as a child. He liked her instinctively now.

"You'll think it odd of me to come here this way, but I found you had no phone. I *had* to see you!"

"But I'm delighted."

"It—it wasn't easy to come, Philip," she said, in her throaty voice. "It isn't going to be easy to tell you. . . ."

"Maybe it would be easier sitting down—and with a cigarette."

"Thanks," She took the armchair Baxter had vacated and accepted a cigarette. "I don't know about you, Philip, but we Tarrants have lived for nine years in the shadow of that dreadful bet our fathers made."

She drew a deep breath. "We need to win—terribly, Philip. But—well, there are proper ways to win . . . and wrong ways."

"I don't think I understand what you're getting at," said Philip.

Jessica crushed out the cigarette on which she had only taken a puff or two. "Betraying one's family is not precisely a pleasant job," she said bitterly. "Possibly you'll think no more highly of me when I've finished than you do of Guy. But I—well, I see it this way, and I've *got* to go ahead."

"My dear Jessica, you're talking in riddles," he said.

She looked at him steadily out of the deep violet eyes. "I remember the first time you made an impression on me, Philip. It was that day at Aintree. You had just asked your father not to run his horse. You were intensely, passionately sincere about it."

Philip smiled a crooked little smile. "I guess I was."

"You were. I remember your saying that she wasn't 'just a horse'. That she was a friend, a distinct personality. Do you feel that way about this gray of yours?"

"I'm afraid I do," he said.

"Then be careful of him, Philip. I've told you that we can't afford to lose. Well, last night a man came to see Guy and offered to take half of our share of the bet."

"Nothing wrong with that," said Philip, but he was frowning.

"I wish I thought not," said Jessica. "This man offered to put up two hundred and fifty thousand dollars at once. That would supply Guy and my father with the money they need."

Philip shrugged. "What of it?"

"It's the *man* that worries me, Philip," said Jessica earnestly. "His name is Carey—Walter Carey."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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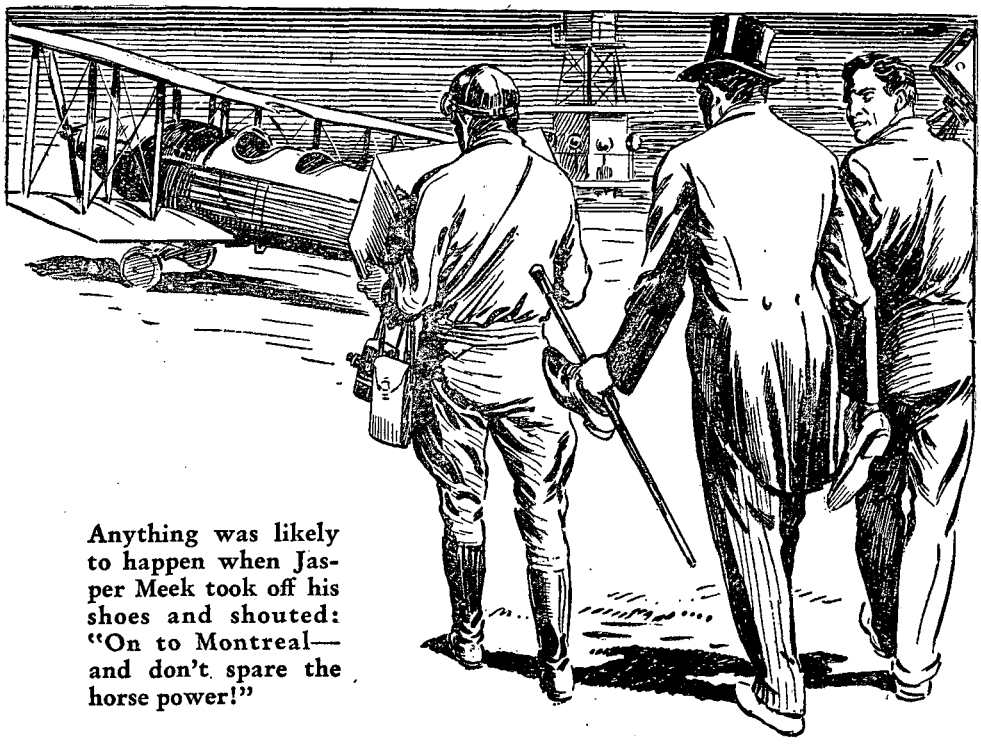

Anything was likely to happen when Jasper Meek took off his shoes and shouted: "On to Montreal—and don't spare the horse power!"

Canada, Here We Come

By KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

I WAS sitting in the commercial flight office at France Field in Panama, talking to Packer Gaffney, when I noticed the tall, flashily dressed man with red hair. He was making a nuisance out of himself.

Just in front of the office, the southbound plane was loading passengers and baggage for Guayaquil, Lima, Santiago and the trans-Andean air express to Buenos Aires. The man with the fiery red hair was just one of a dozen passengers, but he was attracting more attention than all the rest put together. He protested that he did not like the seat which had been assigned him; he yelled about the proper stowage of his obviously new and expensive luggage. But when he was finally satisfied, he ostentatiously handed the porter a five-dollar tip, so I judged him to be a tourist with more money than brains.

"That," Packer Gaffney chuckled, "is exactly what he wants you to think, but I know better. The only thing I wonder"—he pressed the buzzer on his desk and called for a passenger list—"is what he calls himself this trip—and who will go to jail as the result of his trip."

Packer scanned the list. "So—this time he is Arnold Hornbostle, and traveling for his health. Well, well! The last time I saw him, he was Jasper Meek, and his traveling turned out to be anything *but* healthy for a bunch of crooks."

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"G-man?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," said Packer. "The government has at least a dozen agencies that track down criminals. And that gentleman"—Packer pointed after the departing plane—"will never tell you. He plays a part, but he doesn't take off his make-up and run out and take a bow like a theatrical performer when he has finished. He just fades—until it is time to put the screws on someone else in some other part of the world.

"But his technique *is* funny, and it doesn't seem to have changed. He is going into his act much as he did before, building up a loud-mouthed character that will fool a lot of people—just as it fooled me."

"Tell me about it," I said.

And he did. . . .

I WAS flying off a little field in New Jersey at the time (said Packer Gaffney) and running my own charter service. It was before the repeal of prohibition, so Canada was still a mecca for week-end parties. Those parties often wound up with the name of some rich man smeared all over the newspapers, because he had drunk too much and made a fool of himself. A lot of other people *might* have received the same nasty publicity except that they paid through the nose to keep things quiet. And the cops have a name for that: They call it blackmail.

Anyway, it was the middle of a threatening summer afternoon and I had gone home for a bite of lunch because I did not expect any business in that kind of weather. The phone rang. It was my mechanic at the airport.

"Want to make a charter flight to Shediac, New Brunswick, and from there to Montreal?" he asked.

No aviator ever makes but one answer to that kind of a question: "How much money has the man got?" I asked.

"Plenty," said the mechanic, "or at least, he can get it." He went on to tell me that our customer had a couple of hundred dollars with him, and had just telephoned to a bank in Montreal. The mechanic had talked to the bank, and they had okayed the man for twelve hundred more. "And he seems to have had a couple of snifters," added the mechanic.

People who charter airplanes to fly to the ends of the earth in bad weather usually have had a couple of drinks, so unless he was actually drunk—in which case it would cost me my license to carry him—that did not worry me much. The mechanic said he was not drunk, so I hotfooted it to the airport.

My customer was waiting impatiently. He was the same tall, wide-shouldered and red-haired man you just saw, but he was dressed differently. That day he wore a beautifully tailored cutaway coat and gray-striped trousers. A starched shirt, wing collar, gray tie and gold-headed cane completed a formal daytime costume. He was the last word in fashion—with one exception. He carried his shoes in his hand and walked over to meet me in his *stocking feet!*

"My name is Meek!" he bellowed. "I'm meek by name and nature. I want to fly to Shediac, New Brunswick! I've got money! My feet hurt!"

That was the first time I thought the man was crazy. I was never really sure about it for the next ten days, because every time I made up my mind that he was, something occurred to make me change it.

It was just after General Balbo's flying armada had left on its return trip to Italy, and Meek, having missed the general in New York, wanted to catch up to him at Shediac and take some pictures. Then he wanted to return by way of Quebec and Montreal.

I had a three-place, open-cockpit plane on the field that did not cost a whole lot to operate; I made Meek a price of five hundred dollars for the trip. "Agreed," he said, then called up all the New York newspapers to tell them that he was flying to Canada. He also sent telegrams to three or four Canadian papers that he was coming.

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BY this time it had started to rain, and it was no weather in which to be starting anywhere. But business had been terrible and I needed the money, so when Meek handed me a hundred dollars cash in advance, I said, "Get in." I didn't say how far we would get. All I wanted to do that day was to get him far enough away from New York so that he could not change his mind about going.

He had four cameras—including two moving picture outfits and a press graflex—and a big cardboard box. That was all the luggage he carried. He had no clothes except those on his back.

There was a young camera-hound named Louis who always hung around the field, and when he spied Meek's photographic equipment, he started pestering me to let him ride along. I told him that I had too much load already, and that there wasn't a chance. Then Meek chartered the ship and overruled me. He told Louis, "Yes," and I had an aerial hitchhiker whether I liked it or not.

Meek was still carrying his shoes when he climbed aboard. Louis didn't have any hat or coat. We were a swell-looking crowd to be going anywhere. The way the weather was, I doubted that we would catch up to the Italians. But I sure owed it to General Balbo to try. He would be missing one of the sights of America if he did not see this mob.

I staggered off the ground in the teeth of a rain squall. I scudded across Long Island Sound flying just off the water. Then I bored up the Connecticut coast through the worst soup I ever saw. It was only half past four; but it was getting dark already on account of the storm.

Just south of Providence, I ran into a long, inky-black line which stretched across the sky. I had seen those black streaks before. I knew that it was a line squall and nothing to fool around with for very long. I tried to get over it, then under, with no luck either way. The plane bounced around like a cork in rough water, and the squall was pushing me out to sea. I had to land, quick!

I did. Picking out a pasture, I set my wheels on the ground, and just had time to taxi under the boughs of a big tree, when the storm broke. The rain came down like Niagara. It was the worst deluge I have ever seen—and I've seen some terrors in Central America. If the branches of the tree had not broken the force of the water, the rain would have punched holes right through the wings of the plane.

But it did not last long. We took off again and landed in Boston about eight o'clock.

Meek wouldn't let me say a thing when we got there. He bustled into the office to report our arrival. When he said that we had just come from New York, the operations manager was incredulous.

"Quit kidding me," he said. "An army plane and the mail have both failed to get through." I knew the answer—that those pilots didn't need the money as much as I did—but Meek was insulted.

"Don't you dare call me a liar!" he yelled. He pulled a paper out of his pocket and showed it to the operations manager.

"I beg your pardon," said the manager, very respectfully.

Next, Meek decided that I might be the pilot on this trip, but he was the supercargo; the responsibility of reaching New Brunswick was as much his as mine. Louis and I wanted to go to a hotel and dry out—as well as eat—but Meek would not hear of it. He went looking for maps, and told me to dig out the customs inspector and arrange for clearance to Canada.

That was not so easy; the customs man had gone home. His home was way out in the suburbs—in the direction opposite to that of the airport.

"Wait until morning," said the inspector, when I finally got him on the telephone. "It's rainy and foggy. And besides, if I come down there tonight, it will cost you at least twenty-five dollars for my taxi fare."

"To hell with the expense!" said Meek. "Tell him to come on down."

Until we tapped that bank roll in Montreal, we weren't as flush as all that. I

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began to think that Meek was crazy again.

THE customs man arrived and cleared our baggage and plane. When he had finished, Meek pulled out the mysterious document he had showed to the operations manager. The inspector fell all over himself apologizing for even mentioning the cost of his trip. There would be no charge for anything. I changed my mind again about Meek being crazy.

Meek called the best hotel in Boston for reservations. He was finicky. He didn't want this; he didn't want that; he wanted a suite of rooms—the best in the house. The management would reserve them; it would be on the lookout for us when we arrived.

The three of us drove uptown in a cab. It stopped in front of the hotel but Meek wouldn't move until he got service. He sat there and yelled; he demanded *two* bellhops. I couldn't understand why, because we had left every bit of our gear at the airport.

Then I found out why; Meek marched into the lobby in his stocking feet. Behind him came the two bellboys, each carrying one shoe. The assistant manager and the clerk nearly fainted, but when Meek paid for the suite in advance, they were all smiles.

We went up to our rooms, and then Meek started shouting for the chef in person; he wanted to order something special in the line of food. There wasn't any chef. It was after midnight and there wasn't even any food. Meek yelled so long and so loud about that, that we had all of the hotel officials and bellhops in our suite—also half of the guests on our floor who had been awakened by the racket.

The manager apologized; he was sorry, but there was no food. I half expected Meek to pop his document on this man, but he didn't. Instead, he roared at him, "What! You mean to tell me—and all of these other distinguished people"—he pointed to the tousled array of guests in pyjamas and bathrobes—"that in this, the best hotel in Boston, which is the finest city in the United States, which is the best country in the world, that we can't get anything to eat just because it's after midnight!"

That floored the manager. He sent out to a restaurant and had a meal brought in. And what a meal! You would have thought that Jasper Meek was the king of Siam. They even had flowers on the table, and they found him a bottle of whisky easier and quicker than they found the food. By the time we had finished the meal and polished off the whisky, the night was about gone, and it was time to shove off for Shediac. Meek had paid for the suite but we never went to bed at all.

We took off about five o'clock. When we landed at Portland, Maine, we discovered that we were entirely too early for the boys. There wasn't a soul around the airport. We were all starved, so I took off again and flew to Old Orchard. I picked the smoothest stretch on the beach and stopped rolling right in front of a frame hotel. The beach was lined with hotels, but this one was closest, so we went in. Meek ordered enough food for a dozen people.

"Tell me," said the proprietor, "why you landed in front of *my* hotel."

"I looked them all over from the air," said Meek, "and picked out yours because it is the finest looking hotel in Old Orchard, which is the finest town in Maine, which is the grandest state in the U. S. A."

After that, we couldn't pay for a thing—it was all free. The proprietor even made us a present of a case of near beer—as if I didn't already have more than enough load to lug. It was a big morning in Old Orchard; everybody in that part of Maine came down to the beach to see us off. Meek took pictures of the airplane; he took pictures of the hotel and the proprietor; he even took pictures of the case of beer. Everybody shook hands and promised to send postal cards. We finally took off, but were hardly in the air when Meek motioned me down again, violently. Something must be wrong!

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Something *was* wrong, Meek had forgotten one of his shoes. We landed and rescued the shoe, then made another futile take-off. This time he had forgotten his cane, so I had to go back for that.

ALL the extra take-offs and landings used up a lot of gas, and we did not have any to spare if we were to reach Bangor. On top of that, we ran into a nasty head wind and the ship just crawled along.

Bangor was in sight, but still a few miles away, when the motor gave a cough, then died. For a few seconds I thought the jig was up. I had about five thousand feet of altitude, but the plane was heavy, even without any gas. But we made it! I slid across the trees with only inches to spare, and landed with a dead stick.

I said, "Listen, Mr. Meek. That case of beer is the last straw. It weighs too much; we'll have to leave it behind."

"Certainly," said Meek. "I never liked beer anyway. I'll go find a case of whisky." Luckily, he couldn't find any. We refueled and got back into the plane. I scrouged down in the cockpit and thought, "Canada, here we come!"

We landed next in St. John, New Brunswick. There we had to pass the Canadian customs, and for the first time I found out what was in Meek's cardboard box—three women's hats, from somebody's bargain basement and priced at about ninety-eight cents. What they were for, I couldn't even imagine. Neither could the customs, and that was the hitch. They insisted that Meek could not be a tourist; he must be a commercial traveler—a hat salesman.

"Don't call me a salesman," shouted Meek, and reached for his inside pocket.

I thought, "Oh, oh! Here comes the mysterious document." But Meek changed his mind and didn't show it.

"Those hats," he said, "are for my personal use—and be damned to your questions; I'll buy a drink."

The customs filled up yards of paper and wore out a couple of pencils over the hats. They finally let us go, but told us that we would have to check with the customs every time we landed in Canada. Louis was now convinced that Meek was crazy as a coot and so was I, except for just one thing: Somehow, that seemed to be just exactly what Meek wanted people to think.

We flew to Shediac, and over the bay. Of course Balbo was gone, but Meek took a lot of pictures of a decrepit old seaplane that was just taking off. When we landed, he insisted that he had photographed the last of Balbo's fleet, getting away late. He should have known better—and perhaps he did.

There was no decent field at Shediac, so I had made my landing at Moncton. We were all out of money, and the bank was closed. Meek calmly inquired for the cashier's home. He found it, then asked for a hundred dollars. The cashier could not get into the bank because it was sealed with a time lock. He said that he did not have that much money personally, but he would try to raise it around the town. I had heard bankers talk that way before and thought it was the old ear-oil, but—

I'll be damned if that cashier didn't go and borrow a hundred bucks and turn them over to Meek!

Then Meek told me to show our appreciation by taking the cashier for a ride in the plane while he did some shopping with the hundred dollars. I took him; and then nearly fainted when I landed and saw what Meek had bought and expected me to lug in the plane. There were two cases of assorted liquor and a folding card table —for what purpose, I didn't know. But it was getting late and there was no time to argue. I loaded the liquor and tied the table on a wing—and thanked my stars that the field was big enough for a long take-off run.

Meek insisted on clearing the customs for Quebec—non-stop—although I tried to tell him that we could not make it in one jump. I doubted that we could even make Caribou; I might have to land at Woodstock. And there were a lot of complica-

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tions involved in that flight: We were flying from one place in Canada to another spot in Canada, but the way the border lies, the corner of the United States juts up between, and we had to fly across part of it. The only decent intermediate field was in that corner—at Caribou, Maine—and if I had to land there with all that booze aboard, we would be in trouble with the U. S. Customs.

Meek would not listen, but by this time I should have known that he never listened to anything. All he said was, "We'll clear for Quebec," and we did.

BUT, just as I expected, we didn't get there that night. I re-gassed at Woodstock, and then made Caribou in the pitch dark. The field was black as your hat—not a light anywhere. I made out the general outline of the landing space and put her on the ground—downhill. The ship careened down the slope and gave me heart failure. It stopped rolling within a foot of the fence.

The caretaker of the airport was a farmer who lived nearby. He warned us officially that we were now in the United States, that we must not unload anything until he phoned for the customs.

"To hell with the customs," said Meek. "Phone for a couple of cabs." He unloaded the junk—including the booze—and we drove to a hotel.

Meek wouldn't take any of the rooms he was offered, because they didn't have kitchens. He had now decided that he was a cook and wanted to prepare his own dinner. The proprietor finally moved out of his own apartment and turned it over to us. Meek gave me a list of stuff as long as your arm and sent me to buy food.

There wasn't a store of any kind open, but by this time I had Meek's system down pat; I found a storekeeper's house and routed him out. I bought everything from frozen steaks to canned mushrooms, and enough of it for an army. I returned to the hotel, and Meek took off his cutaway coat and went to cooking and—I'll be damned if he wasn't a swell cook!

The phone rang! It was the customs. To say that they were mad was no word for it. They were erupting! They ordered us to return to the airport, instantly.

"Can't," said Meek. "I'm cooking a steak. There's enough for everybody; come up and get some." He hung up in their ear.

The phone jangled three more times: First it was the immigration authorities, then the police, and finally the sheriff's office. They all got the same answer; Meek invited them to a steak dinner, but be damned if he was going back to that airport!

About the time we sat down to dinner, the door burst open. If there was one man in uniform, there were a dozen. A procession of cops, customs inspectors, immigration men and deputy sheriffs crowded into the room.

"What in the hell is all this about a steak!" bellowed a big guy.

"There's the steak," said Meek, "and it's a damn good one. Eat it; I'll mix you a drink." He set out steaming platters of steak and enormous highballs. He refused to answer any questions until he had "fed his distinguished guests."

When the dinner and the drinking were over, they didn't want to ask any questions. They said, "Skip it. Keep your liquor—or what's left of it."

"Oh no," said Meek. "I wouldn't think of smuggling. We're not staying in the United States. This was a forced landing; we're taking the booze back to Canada in the morning."

The chief inspector got me aside. "Is this guy bugs?" he asked. "Should I warn the Canadians to look out for him?"

"Search me," I said. "I'm trying to make up my mind about him. Either he is nuts or—" I didn't finish my sentence. If this was some kind of a game, I wasn't going to be the one to spoil it for him, so all I said was, "Well, I'm going to bed."

Only I didn't. Except for Louis—who had drawn a blank—nobody got any sleep again that night.

We went out to the field early next

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morning. There was a bunch of food left over, and Meek insisted on taking it along. A lot of the liquor had been used up, but I still couldn't get all that junk in the cockpit and leave enough room for the passengers. So I unloaded everything and started the other way around. I put the passengers in first, and then stowed the loaves of bread, the butter and the whisky in their laps. I tied the table on the wing again.

FROM Caribou to the Maine-Canadian border is an unending forest. I could spot the border long before I reached it, spot it just as clearly as though it had been painted on the ground. The French-Canadian farmers had cleared the timber from their side and had the soil under cultivation. The forest stopped abruptly and the fields began—which made things a little better for me in case of a forced landing.

We landed in Quebec about ten that morning. Meek separated himself from the bundles before I had stopped rolling. He held up his hand and forbade me to taxi a foot.

Now I discovered what the folding table was for: It was a flying bar. Meek untied the thing and set it up on the ground right beside the cockpit. He loaded it with bottles and invited everybody at the airport to a party, right then and there. The fact that the celebration was smack in the center of the field and blocking most of the traffic, didn't disturb Meek in the slightest.

We had more trouble with the customs. Our clearance from Moncton called for a non-stop flight to Quebec. It was dated the night before, and the officials couldn't understand how we had been flying all night long on a four hour gas supply. Meek would not tell them anything, so they used up a few more yards of paper and another dozen pencils.

While the customs men got gray hair over, "hats, *women's,* three, alleged to be for the personal use of Jasper Meek; sex, *male*—see invoice number three," Meek called the Hotel Mackinac on the phone.

"Have you got a suitable suite for myself, airplane pilot and private secretary?" he asked, thus promoting Louis to a position of dignity, but still not providing him with a coat or hat.

"We have the suite which was occupied by the Prince of Wales."

"Has it got a radio?" asked Meek.

"Er—well—no, it has not."

"When you have the Prince of Wales suite in condition so that it is acceptable to Jasper Meek, call him back at the airport."

They must have broken all records putting a radio in that suite. They called back in less than five minutes, and said that they were ready for the distinguished Mr. Meek and honored that he had selected their hotel. I am sure that they did not know him from Adam, but they were convinced that he must be a big shot.

We drove to the hotel in the usual two taxi cabs. The manager was standing on the front steps to meet us. On either side of him two rows of bellhops were drawn up at attention, like sideboys on a battleship when the admiral comes aboard, and—

Meek marched up the steps between them carrying his shoes in his hand.

In less than ten minutes he promoted two hundred dollars, and we were installed in a suite of rooms that had exactly six bathrooms. I haven't the least idea how many other rooms there were; I never got into all of them. Meek set up a private bar in the suite and the racket started.

The news soon spread that a rich angel was in town. There were always twenty or thirty people in our rooms. We didn't know any of them, but we entertained all of them. A steady procession of stock salesmen, real estate agents and promoters trooped in—one of them wanted to sell Meek a half interest in a sturgeon farm to raise bigger and better caviar. And there were a lot of women hanging around—don't forget that!

By the second day, Meek had every-

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body in the hotel wild. He bought a jack rabbit and kept it in the bath tub. He invented a new kind of race for bellhops. With two of them standing in the room, Meek would toss two of those women's hats out the window and give a five-dollar prize to the boy who raced down fourteen flights of steps and returned first with a hat. The bellhops loved it; the manager didn't.

A FRENCH battleship was due in Quebec for a visit. Meek decided that he would be first to welcome it. He planned to jump from the plane in a parachute and land on the deck of the ship. That was wild enough, but then he went out and bought a prison-striped bathing suit to wear when he made the jump. He tried the suit on in the store, then wore the thing home in a taxi.

While he was on the way to the hotel, a big building caught fire. Most of the fire apparatus in Quebec thundered by. Meek turned his taxi around and went to the fire—in his striped bathing suit.

A lot of people were trapped in the burning building. There were hair-breadth escapes and serious injuries. Meek pitched in and worked beside the firemen and really made a hero of himself. Then, when it was all over, he donated ten dollars to start a collection for the victims. All of the papers got hold of that and wrote editorials about the bravery and generosity of the "eccentric but distinguished American."

Meek came pretty close to being head man around Quebec after that—everywhere except in our hotel. The manager hinted that a famous man like Jasper Meek was wasting his time in Quebec, that Montreal was a beautiful city, and that he owed it to himself to go there and see it—quickly.

Meek agreed to start. But first, he insisted on saying goodby to a good looking brunette who had been hanging around our suite. I asked him why.

"She's going to telegraph some friends of hers in Montreal to look me up." There was a peculiar smile on Meek's face when he said that. I didn't pay much attention to it at the time, but maybe I didn't remember it at the blow-off.

Meek, as usual, would not leave a thing behind—not even the rabbit. The customs at the Quebec airport checked our stuff over and walked away. Then I started the job of getting it all stowed aboard. Nothing doing! It simply would not fit in the plane, and I couldn't have gotten off the ground with the weight if it had. Meek decided to send Louis by train with a bunch of liquor, the three hats and the rabbit. That was all right with me.

"But," I said, "we'll have to locate that customs man to change our papers."

I should have known better. "To hell with him," said Meek. "Louis, take a train! Gaffney, climb in! We're going to Montreal!"

Only we weren't, not that night. The weather was too bad. I took off, but when the soup came down on the treetops, I had to turn back to Quebec. That put us in dutch with the customs again, because the inspector had not seen Louis leave the field with the bundles. He thought that I had landed somewhere and left a passenger—and a rabbit. He was convinced that there was dirty work afoot, only he wasn't sure what kind.

And Meek—at first—wouldn't tell him. "None of your business," he snapped. Then he reached in his inside pocket for his papers, but changed his mind and didn't pull them out. Instead, he got real nice and affable. He explained what had happened, and the customs finally gave us permission to leave for Montreal next morning. But, they warned us, they were far from satisfied with our conduct in general; they would advise Montreal to question us further.

In Montreal, the newspapers were blazing with the story. The customs promptly impounded the airplane. That didn't seem to bother Jasper Meek. We went to a big hotel and registered, then to a bank where Meek got some more money and paid me the balance he owed for the rental of the plane.

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THE celebration in our hotel rooms was Quebec all over again—only worse. I asked the manager for a room on a different floor so I could get some sleep. To make sure I was not disturbed, I got the house doctor to say I was sick. That helped a lot—in a pig's eyebrow! Meek found out where I was, and sent down two trained nurses and a case of liquor. Then he called me on the phone:

"I sent you a blonde and a brunette," he said. "Take your choice." I got no sleep at all, because he kept on phoning me every fifteen minutes to see if I was better.

Then two beautiful but hard-boiled girls blew into our suite. They said that the brunette in Quebec had wired them to look Meek up and entertain him. They invited him to a party somewhere way out in the suburbs. Meek was pretty drunk, and we—Louis and I—were distinctly not invited. It did not look good to me. I smelled a rat, and I pulled Meek aside and said so.

"These dames know that you are a rich American," I said. "Everybody who can read the papers knows it; they know that you have been spending money like a drunken sailor. You don't know these dames and it might turn out to be blackmail."

"Yes," said Meek, "it might." And there was something steely in his voice just then so that he did not sound in the least like a drunken man.

Meek went to the party—and I never saw him again until just now. The next day, the customs men told me that all charges were dropped, that I was to take my airplane and Louis and get out of Canada, pronto! I was relieved to get out of trouble so easily, but I still protested about leaving my passenger without word.

"Where is Meek?" I asked.

"He is in good hands. He is being detained while—uh—while the authorities investigate his sanity."

Of course this story was hooey—especially the part about turning me loose without an investigation. I had violated a dozen laws on that trip, and the Canadians don't drop serious charges just because they like the color of your hair. But it was the only official word I ever got—although by this time, I was fairly sure of the truth.

I took Louis and flew home, and that was the end of the thing—almost. A few weeks later I saw headlines in the paper that explained everything. As the result of joint action by American and Canadian authorities, police had descended on the leaders of an international blackmail ring that had been preying on rich American visitors to Canada. Three women and two men were in jail.

The pictures of the prisoners were in the paper. I had never seen the men before, but I *knew* those women—one of them was the Quebec lady who sent the telegram; the other two were the Montreal ladies who received it, and as a result, came to our hotel and invited Jasper Meek to a party.

What a party that turned out to be.

THAT was the end of Packer Gaffney's story. It left me puzzled about just one thing. "But Packer," I said, "didn't you ever get a look at the mysterious document that Meek carried in his pocket?"

"No," said Packer, "and neither will anyone else who isn't entitled to see it. It's only in the fiction stories that the feds go around boasting that they are detectives. But don't ever fret about that boy; he's the goods. He'll be coming north again before long with some prisoners, and the only thing I hope"—Packer rubbed the palms of his hands together—"is that this time he arrests an even dozen instead of only five."

"Why, a dozen?" I asked.

"Because I'm still in the flying business. Maybe I can charter him a transport plane to bring them home."

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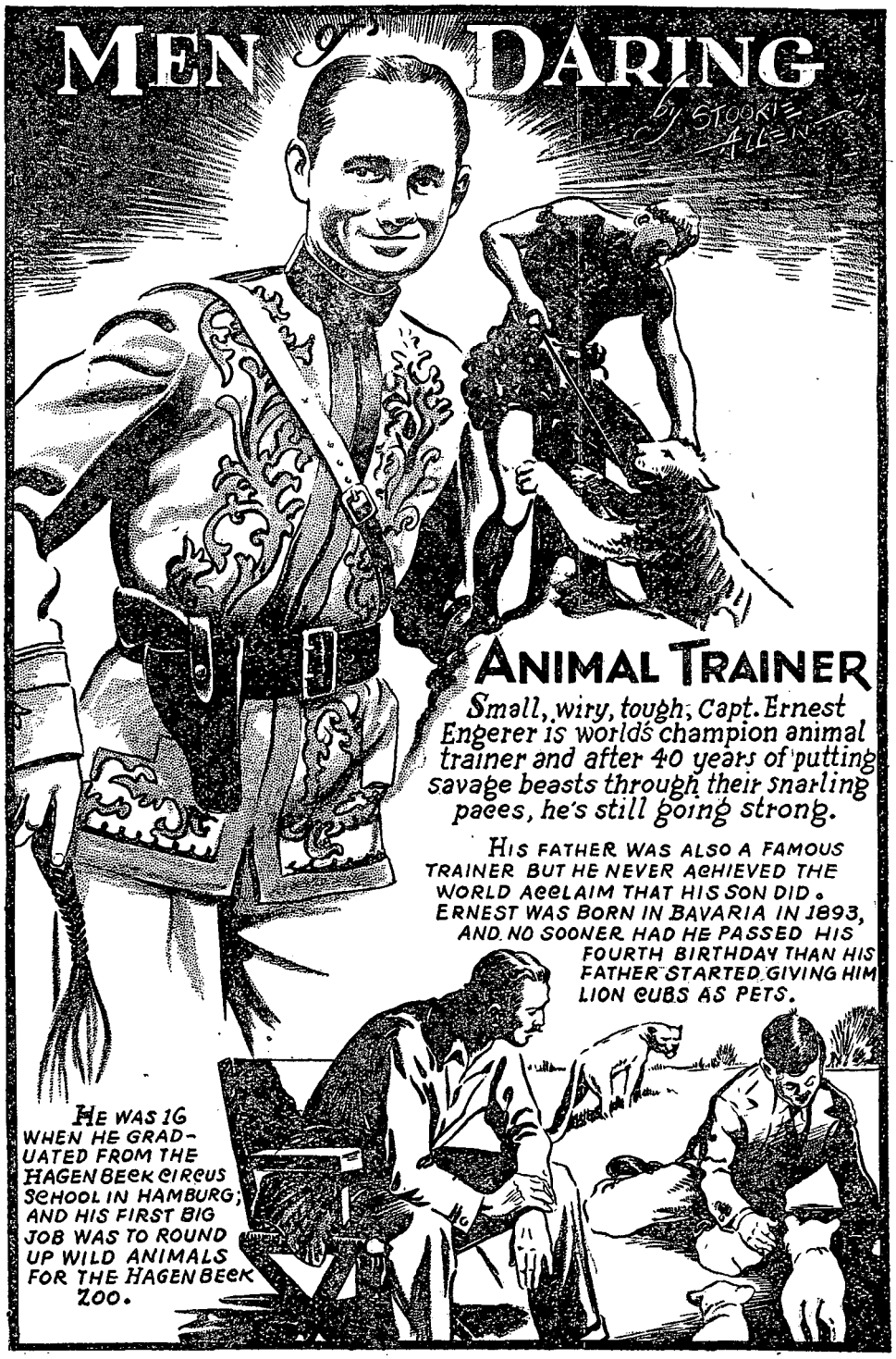
MEN DARING
by STOOKIE ALLEN
ANIMAL TRAINER
Small, wiry, tough, Capt. Ernest Engerer is world's champion animal trainer and after 40 years of putting savage beasts through their snarling paces, he's still going strong.
HIS FATHER WAS ALSO A FAMOUS TRAINER BUT HE NEVER ACHIEVED THE WORLD ACCLAIM THAT HIS SON DID. ERNEST WAS BORN IN BAVARIA IN 1893, AND NO SOONER HAD HE PASSED HIS FOURTH BIRTHDAY THAN HIS FATHER STARTED GIVING HIM LION CUBS AS PETS.
HE WAS 16 WHEN HE GRADUATED FROM THE HAGENBECK CIRCUS SCHOOL IN HAMBURG; AND HIS FIRST BIG JOB WAS TO ROUND UP WILD ANIMALS FOR THE HAGENBECK ZOO.

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A PERIOD OF MILITARY SERVICE INTERRUPTED HIS LION-TAMING FOR A WHILE, AND FINDING HOME SERVICE TOO EASY-GOING, HE VOLUNTEERED, IN 1910, FOR THE GERMAN SOUTHWEST AFRICAN CAMPAIGN. ERNEST MADE HIS MARK IN BRUSH CAMPAIGNING AND HAND TO HAND FIGHTING; AND BY THE TIME THE REBELLION WAS PUT DOWN, HE WAS A FULL-FLEDGED CAPTAIN OF HUSSARS.
AFTER THAT HE CAME TO AMERICA WHERE HIS FAME GREW BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS. THERE WAS NO APPARENT LIMIT TO HIS DARING NOR TO HIS ABILITY TO CONTROL HIS "CATS".
HE LOST AN ARM WHEN, PUTTING 5 LIONS THROUGH THEIR PACES, HE DID NOT REALIZE THAT A SIXTH HAD CREPT IN THROUGH AN OPEN CHUTE. BEFORE HIS HELPERS COULD RUSH TO HIS AID, THE BEAST JUMPED FROM BEHIND, AND KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS. HIS ARM WAS LITERALLY TORN FROM HIS SHOULDER. THE CAPTAIN THEN BEGAN TO TRAIN POLICE DOGS AND WON MANY RIBBONS. HIS PUPILS WERE IN GREAT DEMAND WITH THE N.Y. CITY POLICE.
TURNING BACK TO HIS FIRST LOVE CAPT. ENGERER WON IN CLEVELAND IN 1930, THE TROPHY THAT MADE HIM A CHAMPION. EACH CONTESTANT WAS REQUIRED TO TAME AN UNBROKEN BEAST AND TEACH HIM ONE TRICK. ENGERER'S TIME FOR THE FEAT HAS NEVER BEEN BEATEN!
HE PLANS TO DEFEND HIS CHAMPIONSHIP, AT NEW YORK'S WORLD'S FAIR, IN 1939.

Next Week: Ernst Udet—Air Wizard

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War For Sale

By MAX BRAND

Author of "Pretty Boy," "Big Game," etc.

WHEN the phone of her Parisian flat rang one evening, and Lady Cecil heard over it, coming from London, the smooth, quiet voice of Mr. R.—otherwise Winton Jones, head of the British secret service—she was thrilled. Long ago she had offered herself to her government to use as it saw fit. And now the call had come.

But when she put up the phone, Lady Cecil did not know where to turn. For Mr. R., as calmly as if he'd been ordering tea, had asked her to fly to Germany and recover the plans of the Maginot Lines of fortification on France's eastern frontier.

The only man who could help her, Lady Cecil thought, was Monsieur Jacquelin, the greatest and cleverest and most mysterious of international agents. But Lady Cecil did not know who M. Jacquelin was or even what he looked like, except that he was big and terrifically strong. And at that very moment, M. Jacquelin himself was being endangered by a series of articles written by Jules Cailland, a French journalist, threatening to disclose M. Jacquelin's true identity—a revelation that would endanger not only the great spy's free lance career, but his life.

FATE, however, takes pity on Lady Cecil and sends her an old friend, Willie Gloster, rich, very American, as gay as he is courageous. And together they accomplish the dangerous mission, retrieving the important plans and bringing them back to London.

Meanwhile, Jules Cailland, warned that his part in stealing the Maginot plans—for M. Cailland has more than one iron in the fire, always—has been exposed, flees to London. His sudden disappearance, reason unannounced, leads the public to surmise that he himself is M. Jacquelin.

Before Lady Cecil and Willie Gloster can hand the Maginot map to Mr. R., von Emsdorf, ace Nazi agent, cleverly steals them back again. Lady Cecil, ashamed of her failure and determined to rectify it, makes Gloster introduce her to Jules Cailland, who she is positive *is* M. Jacquelin, the only man in the world who can help her. Gloster leaves them alone together, and when he returns, they have gone . . . in pursuit of von Emsdorf and the Maginot plans.

WHEN Mr. R. admits to Gloster that he is powerless to fetch Lady Cecil back, Willie decides to play his own hand. The British authorities have wind of a meeting in Berlin at which, among others, von Emsdorf and a Russian, Gregor Raskoi, will be present. Willie will somehow contact Raskoi and learn the place of the meeting.

"If I were going, instead of you," the mild Mr. R. says, "I'd try to find some means of

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killing off those men. Slowly. That's what I'd like to do . . . so that another ten million men wouldn't have to die. . . ."

Willie does his best. Which turns out to be very good indeed. He meets Raskoi and fights with him. The only reason Willie does not kill him is because a German girl, Elise, beats him to it. When Willie questions her, Elise says, simply:

"I am very glad I killed him. Winton Jones told me to do it . . . but it was my heart that I obeyed. I wish it had not been so quick for him . . . so easy."

WILLIE takes Raskoi's place. They are of about the same size, and Willie believes that in Berlin Raskoi's face will not be too well known. It is Willie, instead of Raskoi, then, who keeps a rendezvous with von Emsdorf and an Italian, a Belgian and an Austrian. Coldly the four men discuss the positions of their countries in the event of a new war. Willie tries to speak as he believes Raskoi would have spoken, and thinks he has fooled them. Only von Emsdorf notices Willie's hand unconsciously stroking the head of von Emsdorf's big shepherd dog—and Raskoi is known for his brutality to men—and animals. . . .

Von Emsdorf pauses and, watching Willie closely, announces that the meeting is adjourned until that evening. . . .

CHAPTER X

A LESSON IN ESPIONAGE

THE beer garden band broke into the wailing lechery of *Tristan* as Cailland was saying: ". . . in every corridor, imagine, guards; and in the open yards that surrounded the building, more guards, and an outer wall fifteen feet high, constantly watched. You would say: 'How possibly could a man enter the place?' "

"It makes me shudder a little, Jules," said Lady Cecil, "but at the same time I love it. I can't imagine how you got in, unless you were a mole and burrowed, or put on wings and dropped out of the air."

"Can't you imagine, Cecil?" asked Cailland, smiling a little. "But tell me, now. You don't dislike this place, and the beer?"

"I adore it," said the girl.

"There aren't so many bright days in Berlin," said Cailland, "and when there's a sun to warm one—and the trees are such a luminous yellow-green—"

"But I love it, Jules. Only, go on with the story."

"Ah, but it isn't a story," he said.

"No. I know that."

"Another litre, Cecil?"

"No. A demi. I couldn't take another *mass*. There isn't room. But the story—please, Jules!"

"Well, the answer was simply that there was no way to steal into the building."

"But you got there?"

"By walking in."

"Good heavens, Jules! No!"

"You know, my dear, the divine thing in a spy is patience. Ah, I'm a mundane fellow but I do have a little patience. So first I found out the names and the addresses of the five men who were working on the drawings for the great gun. You've no idea, perhaps, how complicated the drawings for a great gun may be! Almost like designs for a battleship. So many problems of recoil, and all that, have to be dealt with, you see."

"Of course," said the girl.

"My problem was to get the drawings, so first I ran all the five draughtsmen to earth. One was a little old man with a sweet pair of blue eyes and one was a fellow with only one leg, a war veteran, and another was hardy Scot from the Clyde, and there was a fat little chunk of a man who wore great glasses; but the fifth man was within an inch of my height. If he had not had staring red hair, which curled all over his head, he would have looked just a little like me, except that he had great lines incised by his nose."

"Jules, do I begin to see?"

"Yes, there was the idea. I went to live in the same boarding house with him. We became friends. I studied his face. I became familiar with his room. You see, Cecil, if you expect to succeed in this work it's not a matter of arriving at a place, performing a brilliant miracle and then walking away again—one must take time and be patient."

"I know! I know!" said Lady Cecil. "It's living with danger, breathing it day and night."

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"Well, at last the night came. I spent the entire afternoon in my room. Sick, I told the landlady. I curled my hair until it stood out an inch above my ears. I dyed it a violent red, and then I put on clothes exactly like the clothes of my friend the draughtsman. There were the lines to work into my face, too, so I put in a pair of deep shadows, like cuts. And then I was ready, so I went down and picked the lock of my friend's door."

"Will you teach me how to do that, Jules?"

"Of course. In two or three years you can learn the trick, if you have a bit of aptitude."

"Good heavens—two or three years? But I *shall* be patient!"

"THEN I went into the room and got his card and his keys from his clothes. Afther that, I went straight over to the place and offered the card to the officer in charge of the gate house. He was one of those Frenchmen with the wine-sour look, a sallow face, a mole on his cheek, and no smiles. He looked at my card and he looked at me when I told him that I had to push through some night work, by order. He called a watchman. The night watchman gave me one look and a yawn. 'He's all right,' he said. So I went on through. My card passed me by the inner guards and I went down the corridor to the proper room—I'd learned the location from my friend the draughtsman. I opened the door and walked in—and there was the fat man with the glasses hard at work!"

"Ah, Jules, how frightful!"

"I didn't speak to him, because of course he would have noticed the strangeness of my voice. I had to trust that the thick lenses of his glasses would make me a figure in a mist. The number on my key told me the number of the locker where my friend's drawing materials were secured, so I went straight across the room to it. The fat man spoke to me and called me 'Luigi'—that was the name of my poor friend. I couldn't answer. I merely made a gesture with both arms above my head, like a fellow too disgusted with life and hard times, and then I unlocked the cabinet and got out the material. Imagine, that I didn't even know how to set up the drawing board!"

"Jules! What was your heart doing?"

"Ah, well, one's heart must stay in the right place. Otherwise one should have nothing to do with such business. No, in every pinch I must count on my heart behaving. But there I was, killing time, setting up the board, and of course the moment I started work the fat fellow would know that I was a pretender if he glanced at what I was doing. I suppose his glasses pevented him from looking too closely at me; and I kept my hat slouched down on the side nearest to him. I put in time cleaning up the drawing with the eraser. At last he stood up and yawned, then put away his materials, waved his hand, and was gone like a shot. I blessed him for that. Then I started work. I had to open all the lockers, get out the drawings, fold them around my body, and dress again. But the thing ended, somehow, and before dawn I walked out with the whole secret of that great gun in my pocket. So I went back to the boarding house—"

"No! What if you had been seen?"

"It was just a little too early for that. I went up to my room and fixed my hair and makeup; I slipped down into my friend's room and put the card and keys in his clothes."

"And then fled for your life?"

"Not at all! I didn't want to have them on my trail. I waited for two days before I left the boarding house, and said a very affectionate farewell to my friend the redhead . . ."

"Ah, Monsieur Jacquelin!" whispered the girl.

"Hush!" he cautioned her, lifting a finger.

"I couldn't help it," she answered. "And tell me the truth. You were not telling me how you got the plans of a great gun, merely. You were telling me how you secured the plans of the Maginot Line!"

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"Cecil, you will not be made a detective. You were born one," admitted Cailland.

She said, "It seems to me, Jules, that I'd rather sit with Monsieur Jacquelin—I swear I won't use the name again today—than with one of the bright angels . . . on a golden throne, and all."

"Cecil, do you know that you torture me?" said Cailland.

"I? I?" cried the girl.

"Sometimes when I see your eyes and sometimes when I hear you, it seems to me almost like love, and my heart comes rushing out to welcome it, and then you withdraw, as you would withdraw now, if I said that I loved you, Cecil. If I said that I adored you, and begged you to marry me!"

"Would I withdraw?" she asked, looking up past him, at her own thought.

He rested his big chin on his fist and stared at her, hopelessly.

"IT isn't I that you care about," he said. "It's only the things that I have done. My God, Cecil, it seems hard, doesn't it? I mean, that a man's past should be separated from him, and not a part of himself?"

"I *do* love what you've done," said the girl.

"But not Jules Cailland?"

"I hardly know you at all."

"If I could wipe out of your mind," said Cailland, "the memory of some one man, how would it be with you then, Cecil?"

"I suppose there would be nothing but Jules left," she admitted.

"Will you tell me about him?"

"Why, he's a funny, rough fellow," she said. "And he has a crazy dash and go to him. I think I would have married him before this except that I've fallen in love with this new life, Jules. And when I look at him and his foolish, headlong impulsiveness I realize how far *he* is from being a Monsieur Jacquelin. It's as though he were everything I wanted except that he lacks that special leavening. Does that seem foolish, Jules?"

"No. Tell me, do I know him?"

"Yes."

"It's Gloster!" exclaimed Cailland.

"Yes. It's Willie. What does he think of me now, Jules, when he realizes that I've gone off into a strange country with a man I'd never seen before? *What* does he think?"

She covered her face with her hands for an instant, and then forced herself to brighten.

"But that's a price I have to pay," she said. "Don't I, Jules? It's only the beginning of frightful things that people will think about me, but some day I'll begin to have my reward. Perhaps now—in Berlin—perhaps we *shall* have a chance to match wits with them, and fight in secret, and go through some great and appalling and glorious moment of danger . . . do you think, Jules, that there is a ghost of a chance?"

"I think there is. A ghost," said Cailland. "There's von Emsdorf. No use bringing him here. He wouldn't talk at our table, and I don't want him to see your face. Keep your head down a little. I'll go talk to him!"

He got up in haste and greeted the tall German at a little distance from the table.

"We'll take another place," he said. "We can't talk in front of other people, obviously."

"Do you know that girl at your table?" asked von Emsdorf.

"Oh, well enough," said Cailland.

"What is she?" asked the German.

"English, and a fool," said Cailland.

"And what else?" asked von Emsdorf. "Lost her head about you? I recognize her, my dear Cailland. She is in the English service."

"She's a pretty thing, eh, and she's no great bother," said Cailland. "She won't be in my way. Shall I tell you her reason for being in Berlin? Come closer. She is hunting for the plans of the Maginot Line! The same ones you relieved her of in London!"

"She's hunting for *me,* then?" asked von Emsdorf, smiling.

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"Exactly," said Cailland.

"She looks like a pretty dish," said von Emsdorf. "She might be useful to me this afternoon. Bring her around to my house for cocktails at five."

"Certainly," said Cailland.

"Jacquelin . . ." said von Emsdorf.

The head of Cailland rose a little. "What about him?" he asked.

The wolfish face of von Emsdorf had sharpened a little. "Cailland," he said, "either you actually were with Jacquelin, or else you are Jacquelin himself. I've checked back every one of the statements you made in *La Liberté* and they seem to be true."

"I was hand in glove with him for a time," said Cailland.

"Jacquelin never associated himself with anybody," answered von Emsdorf. "Cailland, you are Monsieur Jacquelin!"

CAILLAND drew a breath that raised his shoulders in a shrug. "My dear fellow," he said, "if you have a conviction, why should I argue with you—particularly in a beer garden?"

"I want you," said von Emsdorf. "I need your brain. *Europe* needs your brain," he added significantly.

"It's like a haunted house," said Cailland, smiling. "It's generally for rent. Which seems to bring us to money, doesn't it?"

"It does," agreed von Emsdorf.

"It seems to me," said Cailland, "that I deserve at least a half payment for getting the Maginot Plans. My part of the contract was executed. I delivered the plans to the messenger. He actually got them into Germany. If he lost them there, is it really my fault?"

"Remember," said von Emsdorf, "that I did not lay eyes on them in Germany."

"They were set adrift, however," answered Cailland, "and that was why you were able to put your hands on them in London. Isn't that true?"

Von Emsdorf regarded space with a critical eye.

"A half payment," said Cailland, "would be thirty-five thousand dollars on my share."

The Prussian took a breath and made a sudden gesture. "It is yours!" he said.

"Von Emsdorf," said the Frenchman, "will you believe me when I say that you will be paying for more than the plans?"

"Shall I be buying a part in Monsieur Jacquelin?" murmured von Emsdorf.

"You shall," said Cailland.

"Good!" said von Emsdorf quietly. "Very good indeed. May I ask you one question first of all?"

"Yes. Certainly."

"You have been in Russia, I know. While you were there, did you ever lay eyes on the great beast, soldier, executioner and drunkard, Raskoi?"

"I think I did. I think I would know him," answered Cailland.

"You will have a chance to see him this afternoon," said von Emsdorf. "How will you have that money, my friend?"

"In pounds, Sterling."

"The English still hold the trust of the world," said von Emsdorf bitterly. "A nation of tricksters and sharpers, but they still keep all the faith that the world can enclose in its pocketbook. There may be a change, Jacquelin. What cannot be taken with cash may be taken with the sword. Perhaps, Jacquelin, a road is opening before you wider than any you ever walked before!"

CHAPTER XI

THE AMATEUR RUSSIAN

THE bright warmth of the day lifted the heart of all Berlin, but it only spread a sleepy weariness through Gloster. He went back to the hotel and found there a note from von Emsdorf saying:

> Come at five if you can. I want you to have cocktails with some friends. I'll set you free again by six; and dinner will be at eight.

He put the note in his pocket and went to his room. In this state of mild drowsiness it was hard for him to remember that his part was that of the furiously volcanic

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Russian, Raskoi. When he came to the door of the room he found it ajar; a rattling noise was going on inside the apartment. It was the maid busily shaking the door of the coat closet.

"It's locked!" she exclaimed. "I can't imagine how . . ."

"Ha!" shouted Gloster. "But I can imagine that you are a thief! You are trying to get to my wine, are you? I'll pull the hair off your head like a wig, I'll—"

She ran from him with a screech and got away, leaving her broom and dustcloth behind her. Gloster threw them into the hall after her and lay down on the couch, but his thoughts kept walking back and forth between the living room and the closet where the body of Raskoi lay.

He had a sense that he was stopped and lashed to one place like a ship to a pier; but he had not much time, he had to be in motion. That sense of the need of action stifled him. His nerves jittered. So he lay back on the couch and sang to himself, softly, softly. He wanted the little accordion, but that lay in the coat pocket of the dead man in the coat closet.

At four forty-five he went to the house of von Emsdorf. The servants sent him down into the garden, for the great house was built around a court with three Palladian stories rising about it, and in the center of the court a little formal garden was arranged around a fountain. In the old days, there had been a carriage-way around the court paving stones, but the size of huge modern automobiles made the drive too cramped and so it had given way to grass which did the best it could in the damp, dark Berlin weather.

As he came down, he saw von Emsdorf under the arcade, and his heart leaped at the sight of Cailland and Lady Cecil beside the Prussian. Gloster waved a pint of Burgundy which he took out of his pocket.

"D'you see what I've done?" he shouted. "I've brought out the sun, and I've made it shine red, by God. I've brought out a Burgundy sun, and it's shining red on everything."

"Could the red be in your eye, Gregor Raskoi?" asked von Emsdorf. "I present to you Monsieur Jules Cailland."

"Ah, you are a Frenchman!" said Gloster. "There is one good thing about Frenchmen. They have gold for Russians to spend. They are little people but they have big purses and Russians know how to empty them. Give me gold, Monsieur Cailland. *I* will spend it for you. There is too much gold in France, but in Russia wherever a grain of the gold falls, a thousand acres of ground turn green and the wheat shoots up tender sprouts from the ground. Have you ever been a tender shoot, Frenchman? Have you ever pushed from the ground and rejoiced in the first sun of spring? Have you ever heard the peasants singing in your honor? Monsieur Cailland, I drink to you! It is not *Romanée Conti* because that is a wine in which I cannot drink the health of a Frenchman; but in good Pommard I drink to you!"

"Talk to him," said von Emsdorf, privately. "Talk to him, Jacquelin. Test him. See if he is really Russian—really Raskoi!"

"What is your home place, Herr Raskoi?" asked Cailland.

"I come from *selo* Petrova," said Gloster. "Do you know where that is?"

"No. There are a thousand *selo* Petrovas in Russia," said Cailland.

"It is near *derievna* Nicolaevka," said Gloster.

"He lives," translated Cailland, "in Peterstown which has a church, which is near Nicholastown, that has no church at all. That is what he means. But there are ten thousand towns named after Peter, my friend, Gregor Raskoi."

"Are there?" said Gloster. "If you had a grain of Russian wit in your head you would know the place I mean, however."

"How far is it from Moscow?" asked Cailland.

"About three days and a half," said Gloster.

"Three days and a half of what?" said Cailland.

"Of travel by fast horses," said Gloster.

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"In what direction?" asked Cailland.

"In the direction of the warmer winter," said Gloster. "Toward the early spring."

"He means toward the south," said Cailland. "How do people know your town when they come to it?"

"They know it from a long distance off," said Gloster. "By God, the five domes of our church shine like five suns and the crosses above the gilded domes are like five beautiful stars. Men are dazzled and women fall down and cry when they see *selo* Petrova."

"You are a good, religious fellow, I see," said Cailland.

"Religion? Religion can go to the devil," said Gloster. "Lenin was god enough for me. And after him, Stalin is enough of an angel. He can make this dog bark and he can make this dog bite. And that is more than any priest ever made me do. . . . Oh, Mother Russia, I drink to you. I wish to God that fine Burgundy would spring out of your soil like a fountain. Then I would never want to see any other land."

"Were you happy in your village before the revolution?" asked Cailland.

"Yes, happy enough. But my father told me that everybody was happier still in the days when everyone lived on the *mir*. After that fool Stolipin began to turn the peasants into farmers holding their own land, then there was grief. The priest went around with red eyes all the year, weeping for his people; and the *starosta* turned white in one year and died the next, trying to heal the hearts of the peasants. But in the good old days everybody grew fat together or everybody starved together and so one was as good as the other."

"Ah—ah," cautioned Cailland. "Does that sound like a good revolutionary?"

"When you are in Russia, go ask about me," said Gloster. "You will find the story written everywhere in red. Ask about me and your ears will ring with curses."

He laughed and finished his wine.

"My God," cried Gloster, "it makes me drunk when I think how the people curse me! Let men hate you if you want your heart to be warm."

They advanced into the garden, with Gloster striding unevenly in front, and Cailland said to von Emsdorf, "I'm not sure that I recognize him as Raskoi. Do you think he is real?"

"I can't tell," said von Emsdorf. "If he is a liar and a spy, God help him, for I shall surely find out. How was his Russian accent?"

"Perfect, it seemed to me."

"I would have faith in him except that Louvain doesn't seem to recognize his face, and Louvain saw Raskoi in Russia. He's not sure, however, of the difference . . . But I saw the beast handle my dog, today, the way a woman handles her favorite cat. When he was not thinking, with hands like the hands of a sculptor he touched the dog and the dog loved him. Now, Cailland, you are lending me the girl, are you not?"

"The girl?" echoed Cailland, alarmed.

"For a moment, only. She will not be broken to bits. We shall all be near," suggested von Emsdorf. "I know one thing, at least, and, by reputation, Raskoi with women is like a stallion among mares, or worse. If he is left with the girl and treats her as he treated the dog, with courtesy and tenderness, then I know that he is a pretender."

"We shall see," said Cailland, and he looked at the back of Gloster with narrowed eyes.

"Gleich, and you, di Parva, and Louvain—will you come with me?" said von Emsdorf. "Come with me and Cailland for a moment. I have something to show you in the rear garden."

They went straggling out as von Emsdorf said over his shoulder, "We return again in an instant, Gregor Raskoi!"

Lady Cecil was left behind.

"Ah hai!" said Gloster to the girl. "My father had a yearling filly that was as sleek as summer grass all year long. She never grew long hair and the winter cold made her tremble. But she was a lovely thing, like you. Like a fool, God let her die in her second winter and set us all cursing Him. But you are past your second

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winter. You have grown. Come and sit down beside me, my beautiful! There is a heel of Burgundy left in this bottle. Sit here!"

"I think . . ." said Lady Cecil, and made suddenly after the other men as Gloster sat down on a stone bench. He whirled in his place and caught her with a long arm.

"No, no, sweetheart!" shouted Gloster. "However fast you run, the rope can run faster! You are noosed! You are caught!" He caught her back onto the bench beside him.

"Willie, you're drunk and crazy!" gasped the girl.

"Fight, you fool!" said Gloster under his breath.

She raised her hand, thought twice, and struck him in the face.

"AH, that's a good winter drink!" laughed Gloster. "Pepper in the beer! But I can drink it and never blink! You don't see tears in my eyes, my darling. . . . Again! Again! . . . Sweet hands! They fall on my face like flakes of snow; you are as cool as heaven on a summer's day; you are like the ice in the clouds, and I am hot with the dust of the damned journey. Come to my arms, my dear!"

He caught her into his lap.

"Are you crazy?" he whispered. "Fight! Fight! . . . Oh ho, my fine filly! How the oats have sleeked your flanks and put fire in your eyes and whitened your teeth; and how the good hay has sweetened your breath! *Ah hai!* There is no force in your hands! . . . Now I understand you. A woman in love is a fool and a slug in the grass; but a woman in hate can be felt. Hate me while I love you! Show your teeth while I kiss you. By God, I could keep you two years without growing tired. And I *shall* keep you. Oh ho, she kicks? That is soon stopped, pretty legs. Do you think you make me angry? I am not one of the little Western people. I have spread my elbows from the Urals to the Baltic and still I could not stretch out my arms . . . but they are long enough to hold you. . . . Scream, Cecil, damn you!"

Jules Cailland and von Emsdorf had paused under the arches that led from the court garden to the open garden in the rear of the old building.

"Ah, there it is!" said von Emsdorf. "Now if an angel came down out of heaven and denied it, I would know that that is Raskoi. I have heard how he stables himself in Moscow and Leningrad. See the beast, Cailland . . . and do as you please to stop him."

Cailland was running toward the girl. He caught Gloster's shoulder and tried to draw the girl away in the middle of her scream.

"Hit me, jackass!" said Gloster.

Cailland groaned, stepped back, and struck Gloster heavily on the side of the head. The American let his arms fall away from the girl. He spilled back and lay on his back with his legs sticking into the air, held up by the stone bench.

Without making an effort to rise, all at once he began to laugh, heartily. Von Emsdorf and the others were running back toward him.

"Welcome, Mother Earth!" cried Gloster. "Dirty German feet have soiled you, but now the heart of a Russian lies on your breast. Do you receive me? Do you recognize your child? Does the mother-womb remember me? Hail, mother! Hail!"

Von Emsdorf and Gleich took him by the arms and lifted him to his feet. A lump was growing at the edge of his hair near his left ear. He lifted the bottle and waved it.

"To our mother!" he yelled. He poured the rest of the Burgundy down his throat.

"Gregor Raskoi," said von Emsdorf, smiling with a singular appreciation of this outbreak. "Raskoi, do you hear me?"

"Shout louder! Stand on your toes!" said Gloster. "My head is above the clouds. Fly up, up to me! Burst your lungs shouting."

"Raskoi," said von Emsdorf, "you are drunk. It is a pity, but you are drunk."

"Why do you pity me?" asked Gloster. "If I am drunk, God envies me. And you, little, whining animal, pretend to pity me?"

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"You must go home, Raskoi," said von Emsdorf, sobering a little.

"I shall not go," said Gloster. "Now that I remember it, there is a pain on the side of my head. I have been hit by some fool who doesn't know that I shall murder him. Where is he? Oh God, what an itching there is in my hands for his throat!"

"He has run away," said von Emsdorf. "Now, you go home and find some more of that good red wine, and don't forget that we want you here at eight o'clock. But sleep some, Raskoi. Have a little sleep. Lie down and you will be asleep at the third breath."

"Although you are a German," said Raskoi, "there is a little sense in your brain. I shall go. Tonight I shall have him in my hands, shall I not?"

"Perhaps. Farewell, my friend," said von Emsdorf.

He looked after Gloster as the latter left the court and was met at the door by two servants who escorted him.

"Crazy, crazy!" said von Emsdorf. "But something magnificent about him, eh? Mademoiselle, do you forgive me? You have been mishandled. Perhaps he should have been horsewhipped. He *shall* be whipped if it happens that he gets out of hand again. . . . And yet something magnificent—out of the soil—ah, if German brains could direct those hands, a hundred and eighty million of them, we would rip the world apart and then remake it, piece by piece, after a new pattern!"

CHAPTER XII

HEARTS ARE NEVER TRUMP

BUT Gloster went back to his hotel with the world spinning before his eyes, and that world was composed not of the faces of von Emsdorf and the others of his group, but of Cailland's half sneering, half suspicious look, and the wild bewilderment of Lady Cecil.

So, as he strode down the hall to his room, he was already grinding his teeth. He unlocked and closed the door behind him. He wanted to get the dirt of alcohol out of his brain, so went straight for the bathroom to douse his head in cold water. But when he entered the room he saw Elise sitting by the window smoking a cigarette. She was wearing an afternoon gown and the cloak which went with it lay over the arm of her chair. As she looked at him the black of her eyelashes joined the dark of her eyes and made them seem enormous.

"Ah," said Gloster. "Still here? Still tied to this?" He pointed to the closed door of the closet. The girl watched him without giving an answer.

He went into the bathroom and put his head under the cold tap of the washbowl. The water presently ran cold over the nape of his neck. It washed a stain out of his brain, soot out of his eyes. It came rushing down across his eyes and nose and mouth, cutting off his breath. He sputtered. He drank of it.

When he turned off the tap and lifted his head a bath towel was passed over his shoulders. He kept his dripping head bowed. She gave his hair a rub with the ends of the towel and then twisted a hand towel around his head.

"You can lie down without ruining the pillow now," she told him. "Will you catch cold?"

"No, I won't catch cold," said Gloster.

"Lie down," said the girl. "I'll open a bed."

He went to the chair and fell back in it, closing his eyes. He could feel her coming near.

"Why don't you wear a decent perfume?" asked Gloster. "That thick, sweet stuff chokes me."

"It's in my handkerchief," she said. "I'm throwing it away. You can't smell it now."

"Take it out doors and take yourself with it," said Gloster. "Will you do that for me?" She sat down on the arm of his chair. "Will you go?" said Gloster. "And take a message for me to Winton Holling Jones."

"Yes," said the girl.

"Tell him that he can be damned, and his work can be damned, and all England can be damned along with him. Tell him

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that and give him by special regards. My special personal regards for a quick trip to hell and a hot spot in it. Will you tell him that?"

"Yes," said Elise.

"Start now, please," said Gloster.

She put her arm carefully around the towel which bandaged his head.

"Has it been pretty bad?" she asked.

"I don't want you or the talk or the touch of you," said Gloster. "Get out!"

She pulled his head gradually over on her shoulder, turning to him and cherishing his face, silently.

"Damnation!" sighed Gloster.

"It was a fist that put that lump on your head?" she asked.

"A rat of a lying, sneaking French cat," said Gloster. "He thumped me. I had to ask him to pop me. And then Gregor Raskoi—may he rot in hell—fell down on his back and laughed like a drunken fool, and raved about the Mother Earth, and had to be drawn up to his feet, and steadied like a beast."

"I know," said the girl, and he felt the strong shudder that went through her body. "Tell me more about it. Nothing will do you any good except talking."

"No. I'm going to sleep," said Gloster "Don't move. I'm going to sleep. Can you sing?"

"*Sotto voce,* yes."

"*Sotto voce,*" then."

She sang the little old German nursery song which runs like this:

All the yellow sun
All the blue sky
The sweet May wind
The red rose petals
The soft white clouds
Rolled up in one body
And placed in my arms
To hear my heart beat

"Don't be a fool," said Gloster. "Why are you sniveling?"

"I had one, once," she said.

"A baby?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave that in Russia, too?"

"Yes."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

He put his arm around her.

"Will you stop crying?" asked Gloster.

"Yes."

"Sing another song."

HER voice trembled, paused, and began softly and smoothly once more the weird old chant of the snake-charmers in Egypt, a strange sing-song as monotonous as the pulses of sleep itself.

All ye who crawl on your bellies:
All ye of the sixty-three kinds,
Listen to the voice of a friend.
Let there be peace between us.
Peace to you and to yours I swear;
Swear peace to me and to mine.
Out of your holes come forth,
Come forth all ye out of the grass
To look in my face and to swear.
I shall not harm you or yours;
You shall not harm me or mine
In the name of God, in the name of
His prophet.

Gloster slept. After a time he began to groan in his sleep with every outgoing breath. The girl pushed his head back. She loosened his necktie, using her hands firmly and strongly and slowly, like one who knew all about sleepers. The groaning then stopped.

She remained perfectly still. The sun crawled across the chair in which they sat and a cool shadow took its place. She was cold, but she did not move. Once tears poured into her eyes but she fought them back as though an eye were watching her.

Then someone tapped on the door of the living room.

She bit her lip, looking anxiously down at the face of the sleeper. The tap came again.

"Wake up!" said Elise. "Hush! There is someone at the door."

He pushed her away with both hands, looked at her a moment, and then stood up. "Go answer the door," said Gloster. "Give me thirty seconds."

He entered the living room before her, picked up a bottle of the Burgundy,

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knocked the head off the bottle, and went to the window, singing an old Tartar drinking song.

He let his voice swell a little at this moment, hearing the click of the opening door; but as he ran on with his song, his voice still swelling bigger, he felt the weight of the silence behind him, and the pressure of eyes.

He turned, waving the broken bottle of wine, and saw Lady Cecil standing in front of the door with her hand still holding the knob of it. He stared at her and then took a good swallow of the wine.

"Well?" he said. She watched him. He saw her swallowing, with a hard effort. "Sit down," said Gloster.

She walked over to a chair and stood beside it, still drinking him in. "I had to see you," she said.

"It's all right," said Gloster. "Don't be so damned stagy. *She's* in the know."

"I had to see you, Willie," she repeated.

"You had to take the chance of coming here? What if they followed you?"

"I *knew* it was a chance," she said.

"And you had to take it?"

"I had to see you," she said.

"You're not on a stage, darling," said Gloster. "Nobody's going to encore any of these speeches."

Elise went into the bedroom.

"COME back," said Gloster. "I don't want you to go away."

She did not appear again.

"Are you going to be horrid?" asked Lady Cecil.

"I'm not horrid, De Waters," he said. "And as long as you have a good Norman name like that, why do you use such silly, girlish language? Why don't you talk out like a stout-hearted fellow, De Waters?"

"I'm going to talk out," said Lady Cecil.

He nodded. "I hope you will," he said. "You've come to say goodbye, haven't you?"

"Willie!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I don't mean to hurt you like this."

"Whom are you hurting? Don't talk nonsense."

"You can't deceive me, Willie. You look sick. Willie, forgive me!" She came to him with her hands out. He took both her wrists in one of his hands.

"Don't try to make an ass of me," he said "Do I look pale to you? It's because I have a touch of damned indigestion. It takes me that way now and then. Too much Burgundy. Anybody will tell you that Burgundy is hell on the stomach. I mean, you can't swim in it, the way I've been doing."

"Willie, I *do* love you," said the girl.

"That's sweet of you," said Gloster. "But compared with Cailland. . . ."

"I have to tell you about him."

"Is he wonderful?"

She drew closer.

"Willie. I can dare to tell you. . . . You're the only single person that I dare to tell. He's Monsieur Jacquelin!"

"Is he?" said Gloster.

"Yes," she breathed.

"The poor devil!" said Gloster. "He's known you nearly a day and a half and you're already chattering his name all over the face of the world."

"Only to you, Willie."

"When did you find out that you loved him?" asked Gloster.

"You'll hate me when I say. . . It was when he rushed in and—separated us, today, Willie. Do you forgive me for saying that?"

"No. I love the truth. Did you hear what I said to him before he smacked me?"

"No. What did you say?"

"I've forgotten," said Gloster. "But Cailland has nerve. I beg your pardon. Monsieur Jacquelin has nerve."

"Do you know something, Willie? I think he really cares for me!"

"I'll bet your boots that he does."

"But really, Willie. For me! Isn't that miraculous?"

"When will you marry him?"

"As soon as I can love *him,* as he deserves to be loved."

"You're not temporizing, are you?"

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"No. It's only—because I haven't known him long—and something comes up in me at the last moment and prevents me."

"He hasn't held you close enough; he hasn't said the right things," suggested Gloster.

"Willie, don't be sickening. Are you going to make me sorry that I've come? Will you be nice? Will you kiss me good-bye?"

"No," said Gloster.

"After all," she said, "you seem able to find comfort for yourself—of a certain sort."

"Of a certain sort?" said Gloster.

"Yes," she answered, lifting her head. "Elise," he said.

THE girl appeared at the door.

"Come here," said Gloster. "Her name is Elise. . . . Elise, this is Cecil. Funny name for a girl, isn't it? That's why she cut her hair so short. Elise, what do you think of her?"

Elise said nothing.

"She has ideas about *you,*" said Gloster. "Maybe you have ideas about *her.* I'd like to have her hear them."

Elise said: "Will you come into the next room with me for a moment?"

"Yes. Of course," answered Lady Cecil.

They went into the bedroom.

"It isn't exactly the way you think," said Elise, very gently. "Not quite exactly. I could love Gloster if he wanted me to. But we have something else to think about. You see?"

She unlocked the door of the coat closet and pulled it open, slowly. Afterward she shut it and locked it once more. Lady Cecil, with a sick face, stood back by the first bed, resting her hand on the foot of it.

"I understand," she managed to say, and went back into the livingroom to Gloster.

She whispered to him. "Willie, you can't stay on here. They'll find it in a few hours. And then they'll catch you. Besides, von Emsdorf is still suspicious in spite of the crazy performance you made with me this afternoon. He's determined to watch you carefully. Willie, tell me that you'll go away!"

"Don't bother me," said Gloster. "Go back to your Frenchman."

"I have to go back to him," said the girl. "But don't you see, Willie, that there is no need for you, there is nothing that you can do? Do you think that *he* needs help?"

"No, I suppose he's invincible if he's Jacquelin," said Gloster.

"If only you could take off our minds the worry about you. That would be the greatest thing in which you could help," she told him.

"You begin to be a bore," said Gloster. "Run along, my dear, will you?"

"I won't go!" cried Lady Cecil. "Not till you've promised to leave Berlin at once. Willie, Willie, don't you see what you've done? There's the guilt of a murder hanging over your heads—you and Elise. Willie, will you please come to your senses and travel as far and as fast as aeroplanes will carry you?"

He took her inside his arm, opened the door of the room, and pushed her into the hall. "The elevators are yonder," said Gloster, and closed the door.

"What were we talking about?" Gloster asked Elise.

"Nothing that I can remember," she answered.

"Why did you come here?" he asked.

"Vaguely to try to be of some help. Particularly, to try to keep maids and things away from the closet," said Elise.

"You're one of the good ones," said Gloster, sitting down again. "I'm as fresh as though I'd had a good night."

"What do we do next?" asked the girl.

"I go back to dinner at the von Emsdorf house, and then I look around and *see* what can be done. One of the great questions is: Has he photostated the plans and distributed them among his allies? What you do, I don't know. Will you stay here?"

"Probably."

"Elise, what did you think of my lady?"

"Is she going to break your heart?" asked Elise.

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"I'm asking that of you."

"She's lovely," said the girl.

"That's no answer," said Gloster.

"She'll break your heart, I suppose," said Elise.

"Why will she? I'm a free white American, of age. I refuse to break my heart about her."

"You can't help it," said Elise. "She's got a touch of boy in her. Just a dash of independence and spirit; and men can't stand that. It knocks them over. It knocks them dizzy. She tries to treat you like a brother even when you're making love to her, doesn't she?"

"Is she a type?" asked Gloster.

"No, thank God," said Elise. "If there were ten more like her, men would never look at creatures like me."

The door opened behind them. Winton Jones came in, taking off his hat and closing the door gently behind him.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT SORT OF BULLET

THE little man wore gray flannels and a shirt of thinnest gray wool with a fine blue stripe in it, and gray suede shoes, and yellow chamois gloves, so often washed that they were almost white. In his left hand he carried his straw hat and a stick of burnished malaca, the dark sort which has been smoked in the curing and is a deeper shade than mahogany. His body was extremely dapper and young. It was like the body of a fourteen or fifteen year old boy, quick and supple, but on top of it was set the philosopher's great dome of a head with the face peering out inhumanly through the big, darkened lenses of the glasses like a ship's brain through two ports.

"Ah, Elise," he said. "And my dear Mr. Gloster! But wait a moment. Raskoi, should I call you?" He looked at the clothes of Gloster. "I beg your pardon, Gregor Raskoi!"

"I thought you stayed at home?" said Elise, amazed. "I never knew that you went so far afield, Mr. Jones!"

"Oh, I have a dash here and there for the fun of it," answered Winton Holling Jones. "What are you doing with that broken bottle of wine, if you please?"

"That's the way the Russian animal is apt to take his Burgundy," said Gloster.

"You put him out of the way, I suppose?" said Jones. "What on earth did you amateurs do? Drug him and leave him tied hand and foot in the bathroom?"

"Show him, Elise," said Gloster.

But Jones broke out, "No, you didn't do that! You were even greater fools! You killed him, Gloster?"

"No, *I* did," said the girl.

Winton Jones threw out a hand as though to protest. Then he allowed the arm to fall limply back against his side. "What happened?" he asked.

"I made acquaintance with Raskoi at the Landsberg Station," said Gloster. "He invited me to get drunk with him at this hotel. The other things followed on. He was bashed over the head with a bottle. I thought I had taken Elise completely out of it, but I was wrong. She came back like a duck to a decoy. That's about all, except that I'm being Raskoi for the sake of von Emsdorf and his partners."

"You, Elise?" asked Winton Jones.

"Raskoi managed to pick me up on the train," she said. "I came here and then a lot of things were about to happen to me when Mr. Gloster appeared."

"You've smashed my work to bits," said Winton Jones without the least violence. "You've given us a definite time limit. I think we may have had a ghost of a chance, up to this point, but now we lose all chances whatever. Before morning, the body will be found. Where is it? In a closet?"

"Yes," said Gloster.

"A pair of children!" murmured Winton Jones, closing his eyes. "Children! Perfect and absolute children! God forgive me for sending a baby like you into such work as this, Elise, but I thought that there was enough Russian hate in you to sharpen your brains. What happened? Did you lose your head about Gloster?"

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"Not then," said Elise.

"Afterward?" asked Jones.

She looked at Gloster and said nothing.

"Do you know," said the gentle, thoughtful voice of Jones, "that this may set back the progress of the world a hundred years? Interesting, when you think about it that way. Charlotte Corday did very well with her knife; but it was nothing compared with what my dear Elise did with her bottle. The sling of David was utterly ineffective compared with the bottle of Elise. Dear Elise, you will be immortal, of course. And the Germans soon will send you to the heaven you deserve."

"Talk to *me*," said Gloster. "Don't concentrate on her."

"My dear Gloster, you are an American," said Winton Jones, "and I'm afraid that I lack your dialect—lingo, do you say?—for expressing myself."

"Go on," said Gloster. "Go ahead. Be English. Show us why the whole world loves an Englishman. What the devil were we to do?"

WINTON JONES sprang to his feet. He kept his voice low, but the effect was as though he had blown a trumpet.

"You were to obey orders!" he exclaimed. "You were sent out with perfectly precise instructions. Both of you were ordered to trail him, not to murder him. You were to let him lead you to the place where he was to meet the others. Now the chance is lost. We'll have no guide. We're lost in the dark, fumbling toward von Emsdorf."

"I'm dining with von Emsdorf this evening," said Gloster, "and the other three will be there."

"Dining? Von Emsdorf? And the rest? Do you mean that you've passed yourself off as Raskoi even with von Emsdorf?" cried Winton Jones.

"There's plenty of animal in me, Jones," said Gloster. "I merely have to pour it out, and sing a Russian song or two. It's true that he's suspicious. Suspicious as the very devil. Louvain, the Belgian, has been in Russia and did not recognize my face. However, I gave them a little show with a good deal of local color today, and now they feel surer of me, though at any moment the ice may break under my feet."

Jones was on his small feet, walking rapidly up and down.

"Von Emsdorf. All of them. In the same house with them. This is glorious luck, Gloster!" he said.

"Luck?" said Elise.

"Cleverness, cleverness, cleverness, if you will," said Jones. "And for a novice, I can't see how you managed to do it. I really can't! The extraordinary courage of a beginner . . . We'll work out a plan of action."

"Cailland. Have you seen Cailland in Berlin?" asked Gloster.

"The Frenchman? Is he here?"

"He is. It appears that he admits he is Monsieur Jacquelin," said Gloster.

"Admits it? The man wouldn't be fool enough to do that," declared Winton Jones.

"It's an impressive role to play in front of a woman," said Gloster.

"What woman?" asked Jones.

"Lady Cecil," said Gloster.

"She's here also?" asked Jones.

"She is. In the same hotel with Cailland."

The names came slowly off Jones' tongue: "Cailland—Cecil—Elise—Gloster . . . How in the name of God can we work all those elements together and make one strength for our work?"

The telephone rang. Gloster answered it.

"Gloster?" called a familiar voice.

"Is it you, Cailland?"

"Yes," said the Frenchman. "The devil is to pay. Von Emsdorf knows that Cecil went to see you at the hotel. Watch yourself, Gloster. Watch yourself! Von Emsdorf is suspicious all over again. He can't imagine any reason why the girl should come to see you. You'd better be equipped with reasons before you appear at the house this evening. Is that clear? Goodbye."

Gloster hung up the telephone.

"Cailland is playing on our side of the fence, at least," he said. "He warns us

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that von Emsdorf knows that Cecil has visited me here today."

"You should not have come," said Jones.

"That's behind us and done," remarked Gloster. "What's the next step to go? Have you got it in your head, Jones?"

"Von Emsdorf is the target," said Jones. "We have to decide now what sort of a bullet is most likely to hit him."

CHAPTER XIV

THE MIRROR OF JULES CAILLAND

JULES CAILLAND, as the day ended, sat in front of the mirror in his room alone with his thoughts. Yet he never found himself really alone when he had his own image for company, and in the triple mirror of the dressing table he found his face revealed twice in profile and once in full face. His physiognomy remained to Cailland a perpetual interest. The roughness with which the features were hewn gave them all the more distinction at a little distance. A finer polish would, of course, be preferable for close social contacts, but whenever Cailland thought of himself it was at a distance from the ordinary man, elevated as upon a pedestal, removed from the more dusty concerns of common man.

When Cailland found himself in difficulties, it was his habit to retire to a room and look upon his own face because he had such a gift of inner perception that he could see in it, always, only that which was best. He perceived God's intention rather than the mundane fact.

Now he roughed up his hair, suddenly, and gave himself the effect of one who was running against a high wind. He waited for his mind to speed up in an equal degree, and when this did not happen, he leaned back in his chair and sighed with a mild unhappiness.

He could not really be discontented when he had his image for company and if he had had at that moment a glass of good wine he would have felt that the world was going on at an excellent pace indeed. It was his rule, in these times of great decisions, to look at himself first and to find his ideas by the inspiration of his own face. Since the ideas were slow in coming, he altered his expression at once.

It was a time of the highest danger, therefore he thrust out his chin with resolution. When he observed himself in three-quarter view, lifting his chin a little, half closing his eyes, he was like some early god, some Prometheus who had brought the fire to man and now endured the divine torment for his greatness of heart.

If he bowed his head, the philosopher appeared in that weighty brow. If he frowned, fear almost started into his own heart. In short, he could study himself endlessly, and always with good results.

Now, sitting at this telephone, he got the room he was calling, at last, and the voice of Lady Cecil came sweetly to him.

"Ah, Cecil," he said, "how your voice fills up the whole, great hollow world! The lonely world, Cecil. How alone I have been! How empty and alone . . . alone!"

"Are you to be a poet also, Jules?" she said.

"It's when the day ends," said Cailland "that I feel it. I can get through the day with this or with that, but when the day ends, between daylight and darkness there is a deep horizon through which I want to escape into a new life, a true life, a real life, Cecil."

He roughed up his hair, as he said this, and admired in the front glass and the side glass the windy effect of emotion which this produced in his aspect.

"We mustn't talk of such things," said the girl. "If you speak of loneliness, Jules, do you think *I'm* very happy, with the day dying in my room? I want to tell you an interesting bit that I heard today."

"What is it?"

"The real Monsieur Jacquelin—"

"Ha?" cried Cailland, starting violently.

"Wait!" she urged. "The real Monsieur Jacquelin is called Djecklen, and he's a Czech. Silly, isn't it?"

CAILLAND laughed, freely and heartily.

"You are going to von Emsdorf's place tonight?" she asked.

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"Yes."

"Will you be careful of yourself?" begged Lady Cecil. "Will you try to be very careful?"

"Why do you say it, Cecil?" asked Cailland. "When a man puts his head into the lion's mouth, beg the lion to be careful, but not the man!"

"Ah, Jules. I know!" said the girl. "When this business is ended, will you give it up forever?"

Cailland stared at himself in the glass, and sighed. "Don't you see, Cecil," he explained, "that if life is a flower, adventure is the fragrance of it? Subtract danger from existence, and what is left? A stale, dead, unprofitable thing. I'd as soon sit down and read about events as not to be a part of them!" He said this with appropriately large gestures.

"There's nothing I can say. I know," said the girl.

"There's nothing you can say that is not music to me," he answered. "Tell me, Cecil, why you went to see Gloster today?"

"I wanted to tell him that he was overdoing his part," she answered. "And I wanted to say goodbye to him, Jules."

"Ah?" said Cailland. Joy closed his eyes and interrupted his voice.

"I had to say goodbye to him," said the girl.

"Cecil, you have loved him?" he asked.

"I still love him, I'll always love him," said Lady Cecil.

"But—" he suggested.

"Ah, it isn't an unqualified love, now," she answered. "So I had to tell him, and say goodbye to him. He's so simple . . . and so wild and so brave, Jules. And there's something good and full-hearted about him, don't you think so?"

"I think you're adorable," said Jules Cailland. "Will you come down here?"

"No, Jules."

"I have something to tell you."

"I mustn't come to your room."

"I want to tell you the story you were asking about," said Cailland.

"You mean," she said, "about Alexander's marriage?"

"Yes."

"I'm *hungry* to hear it!" she cried.

"Then come to me, Cecil."

"Jules, I simply mustn't."

"If you cared for me, Cecil . . ."

"I *do* care for you, Jules."

"Ah, but not much."

"That's not true."

"And still you won't come?"

"I musn't. But oh, how I want to hear about the king's marriage! Goodbye, Jules."

The receiver clicked at the other end of the line, and Cailland, smiling and frowning at the same time, slowly put up the instrument. He observed his windy hair in the glass and found there, to his surprise, not only the two large images of himself but also a third face that drifted slowly towards the glass from the distant direction of the door. It was a dim light that lived in the room, by this time, and the features of the face that moved toward him were obscured as though by a mist. Even through that dimness Cailland guessed enough to make him leap to his feet and gasp out: "Jacquelin!"

"Sit down," said Monsieur Jacquelin. . . .

CAILLAND collapsed into his chair, with his back to his visitor. He sat there with his fists pressed against his face and his head thrown back, whispering: "Jacquelin, why have you come? Why have you come? Are you angry, Jacquelin?"

Jacquelin moved on until he was immediately behind Cailland. In this position, the Frenchman was unable to see the reflection of the other higher than the shoulders; so he was left without that intimate guide, the study of the face which speaks.

"Have you sold yourself to von Emsdorf?" asked Jacquelin.

"He gave me only what he owed me for the stealing of the plans."

"How much did he pay you?"

"A few thousands."

"You sit taller in your chair and you stand bigger in your world," said Jacquelin. "How many thousands did he pay you?"

"Jacquelin . . ."

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"Tell me!"

"Thirty-five thousand dollars."

"That is enough to buy your soul," said Jacquelin.

"No, no!" cried Cailland. "He bought nothing. I have not broken my promises. Just now I have been sending a warning—as you know . . ."

"If von Emsdorf's plans succeed, you would have the world before you, Cailland."

"Jacquelin . . ."

"Well?"

"I think it may be true. He may bring the world to his feet. Suppose that we work together? You and I together, as it was in the old days? Jacquelin, time has passed over me. When you left me, all the glow went out of the world. I found myself dropped down among little men again. There was nothing of importance. When I began to write the articles for *La Liberté* it wasn't really with the purpose of injuring you, but it was because I was vain. I was a fool. I wanted to show the world that I once had been attached to great things, even to Jacquelin himself. Do you understand that? But give me a chance to work with you, Jacquelin, and you'll find that you can trust me now!"

"I think I can, in part," said Jacquelin. "I intend to—in part."

"Will you . . ." cried Cailland, starting to rise from his chair.

"Sit still," said Jacquelin.

Cailland sank back into his place, straining his eyes upward if by chance he could have a glimpse of the face of Jacquelin in the mirror.

"Go back to your hopes in von Emsdorf," said Jacquelin. "The push *can* go through. Von Emsdorf can have the world at his feet unless he is checked now. And you can be a great man. But if you continue to wear my name, before very long he is sure to find out that you are not what you pretend. What would he do then?"

"He would . . . I don't know."

"There's no mercy in him," said Jacquelin. "If he discovered that you had made a fool of him, ask yourself what he would do?"

"Stamp on me!" said Cailland.

"Certainly," said Jacquelin.

"But if you and I worked together with him and for him . . . Jacquelin, you and I could *both* be like kings!"

"I stand on the other side."

"Immovable?" groaned Cailland.

"Their first intention is the ruin of France. She is your country, Jules."

"She is worn out," answered Cailland. "France is dying. We only forestall the future, Jacquelin."

"Cailland!" said Jacquelin. Cailland buried his face in his hands again. "It would be the death of democracy," said Jacquelin. "It would be the undoing of a thousand years of history." Cailland was silent. "But von Emsdorf and the others can be stopped now," said Jacquelin, "if we can steal back the Maginot plans. Tonight."

"Suppose that we locate the hiding place of the plans—suppose that we actually are able to leave the house with them, what do we accomplish? We run for our lives. Von Emsdorf reaches out after us. We reach England, say. And what then? A pat on the back from Holling Jones. The plans are filed in a safe place. And we—we are forgotten! Jacquelin, I know that you care nothing about money and you will do without newspaper fame; but there are weaker and warmer bits of humanity in me! I can't rival you. I can't imitate you! You ask me to take a risk of a single chance in a hundred, and in the end to gain nothing whatever!"

"Cailland, you must make up your mind," said Jacquelin. "You are the trusted man in von Emsdorf's house. Without you, we can do nothing. You are our point of contact. Do you hear me?"

Cailland heard, and groaned again.

"There *is* a reward for you," said Jacquelin, at last. He sighed and went on: "There is the girl, Cailland."

"She will never have me," said Cailland, shaking his head. "It's the name of Jacquelin that she has fallen in love with.

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I am *nothing* to her. She comes to me with her eyes shining, but when she is near me, the moment I stop talking about the past, she turns cold again."

"If she sees you being the lion in this work," said Jacquelin, "won't she give up the last scruple?"

"Do you mean," asked Cailland, throwing up his head suddenly, "that you would support me all the way through and then make it appear that the credit was mine? Would you make that stand in her eyes?"

"I mean exactly that," said Jacquelin.

"You would let her come to me?" repeated Cailland, amazed.

"I would give up my father and mother and my brothers," said Jacquelin, "to stop the work of von Emsdorf."

"Will you give me your hand?"

"It is here for you," said Jacquelin, and held it out to the Frenchman.

CHAPTER XV

VON EMSDORF'S DOG

VON EMSDORF said, "Truth, Cailland, is what we are trying to demonstrate to an unprepared world at the present moment—the inevitable truth that the *Deutsche Kultur* is the mind and soul of the future. Truth cuts with a sharp steel edge. Is the world able to endure this operation? We cannot tell. At least it is going to receive the shock and without a previous anaesthetic."

Cailland said, merely, "I believe you, von Emsdorf."

The sharp eyes of the Prussian searched him through and through. "You seem a little nervous."

"Herr von Emsdorf, I am always nervous," said Cailland.

"Always?"

"How can one focus all of one's faculties on a bright point," asked Cailland, "without a touch of nerves? It is impossible."

Von Emsdorf studied this for a moment. "In Russia men are different. . . . But I mustn't keep you too long from Raskoi. I'm pleased that the two of you happened to come before the rest of the guests, and I've drawn you away from him for this moment to tell you what is in my mind. Or can you guess?"

"You were suspicious of Raskoi this afternoon. You're still suspicious," suggested Cailland. "You want me to draw him out this evening, because you think that the Russian may have something concealed in his mind."

Von Emsdorf tapped his fingers rapidly against the edge of the table behind which he sat as behind a desk. "You guess almost too well, Cailland," he said.

Cailland shrugged his shoulders. "You know, Herr von Emsdorf, that I will not be talked to like a little boy."

"Naturally not," agreed von Emsdorf. "But you are right. I want you to watch Raskoi."

"What is in your mind about him?"

"A small thing. And yet not so small, either. That dog—that Friedrich der Grosse—is a peculiar beast. It has no love for anything in the world. It obeys me only because I taught it with a whip. And yet I saw it come to the hand of a drunken beast of a Russian! Odd, Cailland—terribly odd!"

"Afterward," said Cailland, "I saw the Russian treat a woman as only a Raskoi would attempt to do it. A beast pure and simple."

"It sticks in my mind," said von Emsdorf, "that all the rest may be beautiful acting. Such acting as only you, Cailland, might be considered capable of. Because when Raskoi extended his hand to that dog, Cailland, it was the instinctive and casual gesture of a man who did not know, really, what he was doing. Only the subconscious was speaking through that gesture, and the dog responded to it."

Cailland nodded.

"The subconscious is the real man," said von Emsdorf, thinking his way through his words. "And when I saw that slight act between the dog and the man, I knew that I was seeing the man's real soul. But how can that be the real soul of Raskoi, who flogged the horse to death which he was

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riding in Siberia, and flung a dog from a tenth story window in Moscow?"

"True," nodded Cailland.

"Watch him," said von Emsdorf. "I have talked on the telephone with Stalin in Moscow and have his description of Raskoi in detail. But the description seems to fit in very well with the man who is here in Berlin. I've made one other step. I've ventured to have a real Russian brought into the house this evening as one of the servants. You'll notice him. Short, stocky, with a dark face. He will talk with Raskoi in Russian. He will force Raskoi into the use of words that only a real Russian can pronounce perfectly. That will be my final test and when it is made, if Raskoi passes, then he *is* Raskoi!"

Von Emsdorf stood up.

"Go back to him, Cailland," he said. "And use your eyes, carefully. The servants are watching him now but when you rejoin him they will leave you alone. That may make him spread his elbows at the board. Do your best to bring him out."

CAILLAND returned to the library where he found Gloster walking up and down the room in his suit of soiled tweed, waving the bottle to punctuate an impromptu speech which he was making, as though in rehearsal for a polemic to be delivered in front of a crowd of Russian workers.

"And as for the capitalistic nations," Gloster was saying, "as for the swallowers up of opportunity, the engrossers of money, the devourers of chance, we will teach them that there is only one picture of the ideal citizen of the great world state and that is a man in overalls, a grease pot in one hand and a monkey wrench in the other. That is the sort of picture that God wants to see on this earth. . . ."

"Well?" said Cailland, as he entered the room.

A servant was working at the fireplace, arranging the logs. Another replaced books on the shelves. A third stood by the door in readiness for orders.

The brows and the intellectual alertness of the three faces were not suggestive of the servant caste.

"Well," said Cailland, "will they vote for a speech like that?"

Gloster laughed loudly.

"The fools *will* vote for just that sort of a speech," he said.

A fourth servant approached the one at the door. A signal passed. The man at the fire and the one at the books began to withdraw, quietly.

"Will the workers like that speech?" repeated Cailland.

"I think," said Gloster, "that vodka is good but it burns the tongue and the belly. And Burgundy is better."

"Is that what you think about political systems?" asked Cailland, laughing.

"What else is there to think?" asked Gloster. "We build the high temple of thought today and tomorrow kicks it down into the dust, and the next day uses the building stones to pave the road. Wine, Cailland . . . wine is the only thinking, as a good Frenchman ought to know."

The servants had withdrawn now.

Cailland said, quietly, "I've been called to talk with von Emsdorf."

"Keep your voice up," said Gloster. "If you talk too softly, they'll notice the silence. Talk loudly, and they'll hear the noise without being able to make out the words."

"Von Emsdorf is devilishly suspicious."

"Why?" asked Gloster.

"The dog, there, lying under the desk in the corner. It seems that the beast was taught only to obey von Emsdorf and his whip; but it came to your hand at lunch and seemed to like your touch. That was out of character for a Raskoi. Von Emsdorf was amazed."

"Kindness always amazes a junker," said Gloster. "It's a quality they leave in the region of the mind and never condescend to practice."

"He spoke about the subconscious," said Cailland.

"German again," said Gloster. "They have to make a mystery out of physical character, just as they have to reduce

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heaven to mathematics. They try to produce a common mean of thought and let nothing get above an average German approach. Your German," said Gloster expanding, "is an exploiter."

"Not so loud," said Cailland.

"What difference does it make if they hear me?" asked Gloster. "The more I disagree with their ideas the more crazy they will think I am, and all Russians are crazy to the Germans."

"Let's get back to the dog."

"The dog came to my hand, therefore at heart I am a gentle fellow; the dog recognized my gentleness; therefore I cannot be Raskoi."

"That's it."

"It's strange," said Gloster, "that he should be right."

BUT are you really a gentle fellow?" asked Cailland, staring at him.

"I'm an American," said Gloster, "and all Americans are sentimental fools."

"From the European viewpoint?" suggested Cailland.

"Exactly."

"We're still five minutes ahead of the time when the other guests will arrive," said Cailland. "I've one other warning to give you. Von Emsdorf has employed for the evening a Russian who will appear as a servant. Short, stocky, dark. He'll talk Russian to you and see if your pronunciation is correct. Can you pass that test?"

"Nobody can who hasn't been born in Russia and lived there twenty years."

"Then go home now!" exclaimed Cailland.

"I'll go home when I have to."

"Gloster, you're more than half crazy."

"We're all crazy in spots," said Gloster. "This happens to be my spot. We've got five minutes left. Let's use it?"

"On what?" asked Cailland.

"On finding the Maginot plans."

Cailland laughed.

"Search the entire house of von Emsdorf?" he asked. "Search it in five minutes?"

"We'll never have another opportunity," said Gloster. "You're turned loose with me and the servants withdrawn so that you can try me out at your own leisure. Five minutes—four minutes left. Where shall we search, Cailland?"

"God knows," said the Frenchman. "Where would you say?"

"Well, I'm subjected to temptation, under your eye," said Gloster. "Therefore I suppose the thing that might tempt me—if I'm a spy—must be fairly near."

"What do you mean?" asked Cailland.

"In this room," said Gloster.

"In this room? What?"

"The plans, I suppose," said Gloster, staring around him. "Three minutes and a half left. Find them for me, Cailland!"

"It's madness even to try," said Cailland. "Even if the place were not plastered with servants. The plans might be lying back of any of those books in the shelves. We'd have to move every book to find out."

"Not as bad as that," said Gloster. "Not nearly as bad as that. Is there any pointer that indicates the right direction?"

"Not that I can see. The whole room is in perfect order," said Cailland.

"Nothing wrong?"

"No," said Cailland. "Not that I've noticed."

"There's the dog, though," said Gloster.

"The dog? What about Friedrich der Grosse?"

"Why should he be lying under the desk?"

"Because he likes the darkness of a corner."

"A dog ought to be with the man he's used to even if he doesn't love the man. But Friedrich der Grosse prefers to lie here in the library alone with two strangers. Remember that even the voice of a strange man is a torment to a dog's ears. But Friedrich der Gross remains on his spot."

"I've given you the explanation," said Cailland.

"Ever hear of a dog staying on a spot even when he didn't want to?"

"Yes, if he's put on guard," answered Cailland.

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"Cailland, walk to the desk and see what happens."

CAILLAND stared a few seconds at his companion, then rose and walked toward the desk.

Friedrich der Grosse watched him across the room with yellow-green eyes, then rose suddenly and snarled. The hair lifted along his back as he glared at Cailland.

The Frenchman halted.

"He's a devil!" said Cailland, going back a step.

"Not at all," said Gloster. "He's doing his duty. He'd snarl at anybody in the world, I suppose, except at his master. It's the desk he's guarding. Therefore the plans are in the desk."

"Nonsense!" said Cailland. "There must be a steel safe in this house and the plans will be in the safe."

"Not at all," said Gloster. "Von Emsdorf is not such a fool as to hide such a great thing in a place certain to be searched. He'll hide it more or less in the open, I'm sure. And the desk is fairly open. There aren't even any secret compartments in it, I'll lay my money."

"But what can we do?" asked Cailland, frowning. "My God, Gloster, I think you've hit on the thing. But how does that help us?"

"We still have two minutes."

"If we go near the desk, the dog growls. If the dog makes a noise, the servants will come."

"I'm going to use some of that good nature and kindness that von Emsdorf suspected in me," said Gloster. "Watch!"

He rose, singing, walked carelessly across the room, pulled a book off a shelf, and went with it toward the desk.

Friedrich der Grosse rose again to his feet, bristling. Gloster held out his hand and laid it on the head of the wolfdog. Friedrich der Grosse whined and licked the hand.

"Dogs don't love von Emsdorf and his whip," said Gloster. "Friedrich der Grosse likes people who are not afraid of him."

He looked over the drawers of the desk without haste.

"Get away from it!" exclaimed Cailland, in an agony. "I've just heard somebody come from the street into the front hall."

"I've still a few seconds," said Gloster, and pulled open the largest drawer.

On top he saw a pile of neatly titled ledgers, such as a German housekeeper would use to store with accounts, patient generation after generation. He lifted the entire pile and from beneath drew out two thick envelopes large enough to take typewritten manuscripts. He opened and peered into one of these before he replaced the ledgers and closed the drawer.

"I have it," said Gloster, and crossed the room again to the shelves.

He put back the books he had taken down and behind the lowest and largest range of books he dropped the two envelopes, side by side.

"In the name of God," whispered Cailland, "have you really found it?"

"I have," said Gloster.

"But what good will it do to leave them there?" asked Cailland.

"I don't know," said Gloster. "It merely means that we know, for the moment, where the plans are. And von Emsdorf does not."

"But when he searches the library?"

"Will he? At once? Perhaps not," said Gloster. "He's more apt to search his *guests* if he misses the plans this evening."

Footfalls came through the next room. Gloster pulled another book from the shelves as young Gleich came into the room.

"Look, Austrian!" shouted Gloster. "Here is a book about Napoleon! I know it by his picture in the front. And here is a picture of Emperor Alexander the First. Is it a book about Austerlitz? Is it a book telling how the Frenchman thrashed you? By God, what a blessing for Europe Austria has been! The punching bag that's kept the real countries of the world in good condition!"

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

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A red tongue of flame leaped from above the trees that hemmed the old mansion

Time to Kill

By HULBERT FOOTNER

Author of "The Richest Widow," "Sink of Iniquity," etc.

IN THE beginning Sam Blanding made up his mind to shoot down Scully Garner in the courthouse yard among their neighbors. The courthouse was the natural place of justice. Nobody would interfere with him, because every man in the county knew the circumstances, and would approve his act. Sam could picture how they would draw back in silence as he stood there with the smoking gun. He would go right on into the courthouse and deliver himself up to the Sheriff.

There would be no trial, for the grand jury would refuse to hand up an indictment. Or if they should, the state's attorney would never prosecute. So Sam had gone up to town and bought him a second-hand revolver. On Court Day, that is the first Tuesday in May, he drove to the county seat early with the loaded gun in his pocket. He knew Garner would be there because he was engaged in litigation at this term.

The usual crowd stood gossiping around the war monument while they waited for court to open. Sam knew them all and they knew him. Garner was standing alone among them. He took no part in county affairs, and was still looked on as a foreigner. The moment Sam entered the gate every man present except Garner guessed what he had come for. All talk ceased and every eye turned on Sam. A few who stood behind Garner quietly moved aside.

Sam hated to be stared at. The terrible silence and the look in the eyes of his neighbors awakened him roughly from his dream of revenge. Decent, well behaved men as he knew them ordinarily to be, now they were licking their lips with the lust of killing. They would enjoy seeing a man shot. Indecent! Indecent! thought Sam in horror. I'm not doing this to make a show for *them*.

Thoroughly confused and upset, he hastened up the path and into the courthouse without putting his hand near his pocket. And so Scully Garner escaped that time. When Sam came out later his neighbors looked at him as if he had cheated

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them. Some grinned contemptuously, and that made him feel bad. Like anybody else he wanted his neighbors to think well of him.

It wasn't because he was afraid of Garner. When he got home he made up his mind to shoot him at a time when there would be no witnesses. This should be a private act of justice. There would be no difficulty in finding an opportunity because Garner apparently had no notion that he was in danger. His big place was just a mile up the road and Sam had only to go there. He wasn't going to shoot him in the back, either. He would speak to him first and make him face the gun. So he would know what he was getting and why.

This plan occupied Sam for a good many nights. After he had cooked his supper and cleaned up the kitchen, he had got in the habit of sitting in the parlor in the dark to think things over. When he was busy planning, it deadened the pain. But after a while he gave up this plan, too, because if there were no witnesses to the killing he knew there would have to be a trial. And that would be an indecent show too, with big headlines in the newspapers, and a courtroom full of staring people. It wasn't fitting.

SO he decided to shoot Garner without letting anyone know. Afterward he would throw the gun into deep water where it would never be found. The county would guess who had done it, but there would be no proof and so there wouldn't be a trial. Night after night he spent arranging the details in his mind.

But he read something in the newspaper about the new science of ballistics that spoiled this plan. It wasn't altogether clear, but the story suggested that nowadays they could trace a shot to a particular gun even though the gun was not found. He had bought the gun openly. The upshot was that one night Sam went out on the draw over Battle River and dropped the gun into the channel. He seemed to come to himself afterwards. I don't *want* to kill Garner, he thought. Killing him wouldn't give Agnes back to me.

However, as soon as he got home he sat down in the dark, and started thinking up other ways of killing Scully Garner. Unless he fixed his mind on something, he could not bear living out his life. The little house was too full of reminders of her. Agnes running down stairs in the morning in a crisp dress matching her pink cheeks, looking anxious for fear she was late. Agnes flying around the kitchen tucking in a brown lock that was always escaping in front of her ear. Agnes going up the stairs more slowly at night with a smile over her shoulder that meant: Don't sit up too late!

Agnes Bourne had been only twenty-one when he had brought her to the little house, and he only twenty-four. She was the only girl he had ever gone with. They had been waiting three years to marry. It was Agnes who had advised Sam to learn his trade of roofer and pipe-fitter when his parents died and the old Blanding place was sold over the children's heads. When you had no land you must have a trade, she argued. It was not considered lowering by the county people. Most of the old families had become as poor as Job's turkey.

Sam's trade made their marriage possible. Of course the house was small and they had no money but she hadn't seemed to mind it. How happy they had been! The only thing that troubled them was that they couldn't afford to have a baby.

Rich men from the North came into the county from time to time and bought up the old colonial houses and restored them. Scully Garner was such a one. He bought Locust Grove at the mouth of Battle River, where eight generations of Bournes, it was said, had first seen the light and had died. For this reason Agnes was interested in Scully from the first. Her family's burial ground was on the old place.

Scully Garner was not the usual type of millionaire who came down for a few weeks each year with his family, a brigade of servants, and relays of elegant guests.

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These people with their yachts and planes and motorcars turned the old county upside down and made the young folks dissatisfied with their lives.

Garner was a millionaire right enough, but he was a bachelor and a recluse. He did little to Locust Grove beyond roofing the house and putting in a bathroom. He shut himself up on the place and raised game chickens, peacocks, pheasants, swans, and other odd fowl. He made no friends but he paid his bills and for the most part avoided trouble with his neighbors. He was a harsh-looking, middle-aged man who went around dressed like a tramp. But he could pay ten thousand dollars for a pair of peacocks imported from Persia or some other outlandish place. Everybody in town knew what he had paid because the draft had passed through the local bank at Criston.

AS time passed and Agnes saw that Scully Garner was neglecting the old Bourne burial plot she could not bear it, she said. The plot stood in a field just outside the house grounds at Locust Grove and was not visible from the mansion. Agnes made it her business to visit it surreptitiously, taking a pair of garden shears to clip the untidy grass, and a trowel to dig around the old rose bushes. Somebody told Mr. Garner about her visits, and he watched out for her. But then, instead of ordering her off his property, he told her to come whenever she wanted. That was how they had become acquainted.

Agnes did not visit the burial plot very often, and Garner took to dropping into the little house down the road while Sam was away working. Everybody could see he was crazy about her—crazy mad the way a man of his age is apt to get. It made a mighty scandal in the county, but nobody told Sam anything about it.

One afternoon when Sam finished up a job and it was too late to start another, he came home and found Scully Garner sitting in his kitchen. He was surprised, but he didn't really mind. It seemed natural that the lonely man should seek young company. It never occurred to Sam to be jealous of a man nearly thirty years older than himself. Sam was slow to think ill of anyone. He even invited Garner to stay to supper, but Garner said no and went home.

There was no change in Agnes as far as Sam could see. However, a week later when he came home after work he found her gone. She left a note in the kitchen.

> Dear Sam:
>
> I am going away. I am never coming back. It is not your fault in any way. You are a good man. As long as I have made up my mind, I had better say no more. Mrs. Patton will come and keep house for you and do it better than me.
>
> Agnes.

At first he couldn't take in the sense of it. It didn't sound like the Agnes he had known. So cold and strange. Yet it was her handwriting and there was her name signed to it. He seized on the notion that she was playing a joke on him, and went through the house calling for her. He found that she had taken everything of her own that was worth taking. He didn't see how she could go away because she had accounted for every cent he had given her and didn't have anything left to spend to go away.

Mrs. Patton was a widow who lived pretty wretchedly in a shack on the river bank. Everybody pitied her, but disliked her because she was so sly and so dreadfully humble. She came to Sam's house expecting to please him by abusing Agnes. Sam heard then, in the crudest county speech, about Agnes and Garner. In a towering rage, he ordered Mrs. Patton out of the house.

All night long he sat in his little parlor thinking. It didn't occur to him then that he had to kill Scully Garner. By nature he was a peaceable man. He was only thinking of Agnes. He held out his aching empty arms for her in the dark. He had failed her. If they could only have had a baby maybe she would have been satisfied.

Scully Garner came home alone the next day. The news spread around that he had

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paid Agnes' way out to Reno so she could get a divorce. Everybody was sorry for Sam, and in the beginning they dropped around to tell him so, but Sam took it so badly that by degrees he was left alone. That suited him. He did everything for himself around the house, and never went out except to work.

AFTER three months had passed Scully Garner went away again and brought Agnes home with him. He inserted a notice of their marriage in the county paper. A storm of indignation broke out and there was high talk among the young men. They looked to Sam to lead whatever was done, but he went around like a man in a dream and nobody wanted to bring the subject up. As for the Garner's, they sent their Negro servant to the village for what they wanted and remained inside their own gates.

One night Ben Boardman, the young lawyer, drove down to see Sam. "Sam," he said, "you've got to sue that damned Garner for alienation."

"How?" said Sam.

"I say, sue him for alienation of affections. I went to the bank and found out he's worth near two million. Sue him for half a million, and I'll take the case."

Sam saw red. "What!" he cried. "Take *money* from him? Why you—" Nobody in the world had ever heard Sam cuss like that. "Get the hell out of my house!" he cried. Boardman left in a hurry, and Sam assisted him across the porch with the toe of his boot.

This action of Sam's was approved by the whole community. They expected something more to follow. It was a part of the old tradition that a man must avenge such an injury or he was no man. Nobody dared to speak of it to Sam, but he could read the question in all their eyes. When are you going to kill him? It was then that he went to town and bought the gun. Once he began to think of killing Garner, the idea fascinated him.

After he had thrown away the gun, he sat in his parlor night after night planning out other ways. For a long time he considered using a knife. There was something clean and true about a knife, and what a pleasure it would be to polish and to sharpen it to a needle point! All the strength of his body should go into one blow!

Sometimes in the beginning Sam would pull up with a start of horror at his own thoughts. But I'm not going to do it really, he would tell himself, this is just to forget! Immediately he would start dreaming again. Always he was able to think of some improvement on his plan, or invent a new one that would work more smoothly. He could not be satisfied until it was perfect in every detail. During the day he looked forward to these quiet hours in the dark. The life that he lived in his mind was more vital than plumbing and roofing. Often in the daytime he would lose himself in his dream.

When Sam's brother Harry, who lived out West, heard in some roundabout manner of Sam's trouble, he wrote suggesting that Sam join him in Alberta and get a fresh start. Sam found that his dream had become so dear to him that he couldn't give it up. "I'll come out as soon as I've done my work here," he wrote Harry.

Time passed almost without his knowledge. The excitement about Garner and Agnes blew over, and by degrees everybody except Sam half forgot about it. The Garners received no visits and paid none: but their names headed every subscription list, and people began to speak of them more kindly.

In the course of time Agnes had a baby. Dr. Lancaster said that it was a fine lusty infant, a girl; they were going to call it Phyllis. The news shook Sam strangely. He felt that this ought to have been his baby, and after awhile he felt that it *was* his baby. He had a tormenting desire to see it and to hold it in his arms.

Every winter the Garners went to the city to live for the three worst months. In Criston, people said that their hotel bill was as high as two hundred dollars a week. Criston shook its head about that . . .

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DURING the following year a second child was born to Agnes, another girl, named Phoebe, and Sam experienced another heart-ache.

When the children were three and four years old, Sam was unexpectedly given the job of installing a bathroom in the nursery at Locust Grove. The builders had finished their work, and the fittings were on hand; all he had to do was to connect the pipes. He went to the house shaking as if he had a chill, trembling with his longing to see Agnes and the babies, and with his dread of it. During the past four years he had occasionally met Agnes riding in the road. She was much more beautiful, and she always wore lovely clothes.

At first they passed each other with eyes straight ahead, but lately they had nodded in the county way. Sam never spoke to her, though.

When he got to Locust Grove, a servant took him upstairs to his work. As an hour went by, he realized that Agnes intended keeping out of his way. He was terribly disappointed, but he admitted that it was the right thing for her to do. He could hear the two little children playing in the next room; ceaselessly running about and crying out in shrill sweet pipings that sounded almost like young quail.

It finally got so that he couldn't bear it, and he made believe that his work required him to open the door. Instantly the two little girls ran in to watch him. It took his breath away to be so close to them. Little beauties! Especially Phyllis, with her delicate limbs, her straight spine, her unafraid gaze. Phoebe still kept some of the roundness of babyhood, and stood with a finger in her mouth. There was a colored girl in the room ironing their clothes and keeping an eye on them.

"How do you do?" said Phyllis gravely. "We were hoping we would see you."

"You're the bathroom man," said Phoebe.

"Can we put water in the bath now?" asked Phyllis.

"Not yet," said Sam, smiling.

He made believe that he had a low pipe to fix so that he could drop to his knees and look closer into their faces. So innocent and lovely! So like Agnes! He didn't dare touch them.

"I've got a fish to put in our bathtub," said Phoebe. "It's a red one."

"It's not a real fish," Phyllis explained confidentially. "It squeaks when you squeeze it."

"And if water goes in the squeaker it will drown," said Phoebe opening her eyes very wide.

"But the water will run out again," said Phyllis. "It doesn't do it any harm."

Footsteps were heard in the corridor. "Here comes Mummy!" cried the children. They ran toward the other door in the room, and Sam quickly closed his door. He gripped hold of the edge of the basin to steady himself. He couldn't bear to see Agnes just then.

He heard the children excitedly talking to their mother. "We saw the bathroom man . . . We didn't open the bathroom door, Mummy. He did . . . He is a nice man, Mummy."

Then Agnes' low voice: "You mustn't bother him, darlings."

ON the following morning he started a little earlier so that he could drive into the village first and buy a package of peppermint drops. As soon as he opened the door, they came running.

"Good morning, bathroom man."

"Can we have a bath in our bath today?"

"I'm doing my best," said Sam grinning. He offered them the bag of candy, as shy as a child himself. They helped themselves daintily. In a moment or two Phoebe said, eyeing the bag: "I love pepperminutes!"

"Hush, Phoebe!" said Phyllis. "You must wait until you are asked."

"They are for you," said Sam offering the bag.

"I'll give it to nurse," said Phyllis. "We can't have the whole bag, because we might make ourselves sick."

"Will you watch me when I take my first bath?" asked Phoebe.

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"I wish I could," said Sam very low.

The job lasted three days. Before he left the house he made some minor repairs to the other bathroom. He had no other opportunity to approach the little girls. However, they never forgot him. Whenever he passed the Garner car in the road they waved their hands and hailed him.

Time passed and their legs grew longer. Phoebe lost all trace of her baby roundness and became another straight-backed runner like her sister. Agnes Garner was beginning to renew old friendships with the young women of the county. The old story was forgotten now. But not by Sam.

WITHOUT his realizing, Sam's dream life was encroaching more and more on his working hours. He resented being shaken out of his dream. He was not so good a workman as he had been, and the jobs were fewer. He was glad of that, because it left him with more time to himself. His wants were simple and he had enough.

Every night when he washed up the supper dishes, he sat down in the parlor and picked up the complicated threads of his fantasy. Nowadays the plans that he made and elaborated and discarded were much more subtle. It must appear that Scully Garner had been struck down by God in punishment for his sin. Sam identified himself as the instrument of God's vengeance. He was no longer aware of the line that separated dream from reality.

From the gossip of the Negroes he had picked up a good deal of information about Scully Garner's habits. Garner always went to bed soon after supper and rose at dawn. He had a bad habit of smoking in bed. He would fall asleep with a cigarette lit and more than once he had burned holes in the bedding. He was a very sound sleeper. Some night he would burn himself up for certain, they said. All right, thought Sam, let it happen that way.

He had learned too, that the doors at Locust Grove were never locked at night. Nobody ever thought of it because no strangers ever came by. The servants at Locust Grove slept in a separate building. Sam could enter the house any night he chose and start the fire. Agnes and the children went to town often.

The trouble with this plan was, that Garner was almost certain to wake up and get out of the house in time. There was a porch roof outside his window by which he could easily reach the ground. Sam thought of tieing him to his bed, but instantly rejected the idea. The idea of roasting a man alive was too ugly. It was not fitting to his aim. Garner must be killed before his body was destroyed in the fire.

Sam got into the habit of dropping in on Dr. Lancaster after supper. George Lancaster had succeeded to his father's practice and was only a year or two older than Sam. Sam felt comfortable with George, because the doctor never stared at him nor asked him personal questions. Sam was very careful not to let the doctor see what was in his mind. George liked to run on about his work and Sam listened. As there was no drug store in the county, all sorts of medicines and drugs were spread around on the shelves in the doctor's office.

One night Sam saw a can of ether and tapped it with his finger. "This is what you put them to sleep with," he said.

"Sure."

"If they breathed in too much would they die?"

"Sure."

"You could kill a man with this while he slept, couldn't you?"

"No," said the doctor. "Ether is irritating. It would wake him up."

"Oh," said Sam.

"Now the English, they prefer to use chloroform," Doctor Lancaster went on. "That has a soothing effect. That would kill a man without his knowing anything about it."

"I see," said Sam.

FOR many nights Sam considered the problem of how to purchase chloroform without arousing suspicion. He finally adopted Jim Mattingly's old bird dog, so

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that he could have the excuse later of chloroforming him.

He was all ready to go ahead when one evening he saw some packages of a new drug called insulin lying on the doctor's table. "What's this for?" he asked idly.

"Diabetes. Scully Garner has a pretty serious case of it."

To Sam this was like a thunderclap. He waited until he could steady his voice. "Will he die?"

"No indeed. This stuff will keep him going indefinitely. He'll die of old age in the end. Unless he gets an overdose."

In his professional enthusiasm Doctor Lancaster went on to demonstrate the use of the hypodermic syringe. "In the leg or arm or any fleshy part," he said. "To fill the needle you press it through the cork of the vial and draw in the required dose. When you pull the needle out the cork closes itself. Of course the syringe should be boiled before using. I'm starting Garner on two shots a day of five units each. The syringe should be filled one quarter full."

"Will you have to visit him twice a day?" asked Sam.

"No. His wife can give it to him."

"Suppose she gave him too much?"

"He would pass into a coma in a couple of minutes. Orange juice or sugar in any form would bring him back, if he got it quick enough."

"Good God!" said Sam. "If she filled the syringe all the way up it would kill him."

"It sure would," said Doctor Lancaster.

Sam sat in his parlor that night with his head humming. Away with all his laboriously built-up plans! A plan had been handed him, simple, complete and perfect from the beginning! He knew his way about in the upstairs part of the Garner house. The drug and the hypodermic syringe would be kept in the bathroom. He knew exactly how to administer it. All he had to do was to wait until Dr. Lancaster had had time to forget their conversation, and for Agnes to have used up enough of the little vials so that she would have lost count of them. And then the first time that Agnes and the children went away . . .

About this time Sam had another letter from his brother Harry. Harry had moved to a new town in Alberta called Grimshaw. "There isn't a plumber nor a metal-roofer in the place," he said. "And any amount of building going on. It's a wonderful chance! The old county is washed up. Come on here."

Sam answered him saying: "My work is almost done here. I'll soon be with you."

PHYLLIS and Phoebe were now six and five years old and every morning the Garner car carried them to Mrs. Beddowe in the village, who kept a little kindergarten. When Sam learned this he timed his movements so that he would sometimes pass the car in the road and get a hail and a wave of the hand from his children.

One morning to his surprise he saw them hurrying along the road on foot with the colored girl. His heart began to beat fast. What a chance! He stopped alongside them.

"The big car has gone to Criston and the station wagon wouldn't start," explained Phyllis. "So we're walking."

"It's fun to walk," said Phoebe.

"But we're going to be late," said the conscientious Phyllis.

"Jump in," said Sam, "and I'll have you there in five minutes."

"Bags outside in front," said Phoebe.

They climbed in. "I let her have the outside because she is littler," Phyllis explained confidentially. "Anyway I'd rather sit by you."

Sam turned the car around and they started back to the village.

"Are you going to the Sunday School entertainment tonight?" asked Phyllis politely.

"I'm not much for going out nights."

"Just like my daddy," said Phyllis. "He won't go."

"Phyllis and I are in the show," said Phoebe.

"We're going to speak a piece in two

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parts," said Phyllis. "Mummy plays the music for us."

"We have new dresses," said Phoebe. "White with pink bows."

"Mr. Sam isn't interested in your dress," said Phyllis.

"Oh yes, I am," said Sam.

"And we're going to stay up until eleven o'clock!" said Phoebe.

He put them out at Mrs. Beddowe's and went on to his work filled with a deep slow fire of excitement. Everything had fallen into place like a miracle. Clearly it was intended that he should do this deed. God's finger was in it. An innocent child had showed him the way!

After supper that night he dressed himself with care as if he were going to a show, too. He paced his little parlor, going over everything in his mind. The Sunday School entertainment started at eight, but he must give Scully Garner time to get into bed. The servants would be out of the house as soon as they had washed the dishes.

He would enter the house by the kitchen door, and if Garner was not yet asleep and heard him, he would think it was a servant. There was a swing door between pantry and dining room that would make no noise. Then he would go up the stairs on all fours, very slowly. By listening at Garner's door he could satisfy himself if Garner was asleep. The bathroom door was the one next, and the medicine cabinet was over the wash basin.

Garner would probably wake up when Sam stuck the needle into his arm. That was all right. Sam wanted Garner to know what was happening to him, before he died. If Garner tried to get out of the room Sam could handle him all right. A man thirty years older. Let him call for help all he liked. He would be in a coma before the servants could reach him. Two minutes, the doctor had said.

AT nine o'clock Sam started out on foot. The lights of his motor car would have betrayed him if they were seen turning in or turning out at Locust Grove. He walked along the dark road, lost in his planning. Going over everything in his head again and again. However, when he heard a car coming he retained sufficient presence of mind to vault over a fence into the field, and lie down. Another car followed the first and he decided that it would be safer to stick to the field. Four or five cars sped up the road at great speed and he could not understand it, because anybody who was going to the entertainment should have started long before.

When he came to the edge of the hill that overlooked Locust Grove and the river, he saw the lights of a whole line of cars coming across the long bridge. Then a red tongue of flame leaped above the trees that hemmed in the old mansion and he understood it. The house was afire. Word had been spread by telephone. Sam vaulted back into the road, and ran down hill like a man possessed.

When he reached the front lawn the whole upper part of the house was ablaze. Evidently it had been burning quietly for some little time before the flames had burst through the roof. Nothing could be done now. Through the open front door the flames could be seen licking their way down the stairs. A small crowd was ranged round in a semi-circle in front of the house, the flames lighting up every line of their helpless, awe-struck faces.

Agnes stood a little apart from everybody else like a woman of stone. It was worse to see her like that than if she had cried out and torn her hair. Her eyes were fixed on the window of her husband's bedroom. Flames were coming out of it. Her hands hung down pressing a little girl against her at either side. Phyllis and Phoebe alternately hid their faces in her skirts and lifted them to peep at the awful sight. Phyllis looking wildly around for help, caught sight of Sam. She left her mother and ran to him.

"My daddy! My daddy!" she screamed. "He's in there! Bring him out, Mr. Sam! Oh, bring him out!"

Sam seemed to awake from a long and

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ugly dream. Everything took on the clearness and sharpness that it had had long ago. He came alive. He felt like himself again.

"I'll get him," he said to the little girl, smiling.

He glanced at the burning house. It was too late to venture the stairs, but he noticed that the flames had not yet reached one of the rooms on the second floor; the front corner room on the left. The porch roof ran up to a window of that room. He ran forward and started shinning up a porch post.

When they saw what Sam was about, a cry broke from the crowd and a dozen men ran forward to help boost him over the edge of the porch roof. The heat was blistering, and as soon as he had gained the roof the others ran back. Sam could not wait to raise the window, but drove his foot through the sash shattering all the little panes, and climbed in.

The smoke in the room was suffocating. He would have to act very quickly. He could hear the fire roaring out in the hall. At the back of this bedroom was the bathroom and on the other side of the bathroom Garner's room. Little chance that the man was alive, but he must make sure. Suddenly the door from the hall fell in and instantly it seemed, the whole place was full of flame.

Nevertheless Sam got the bathroom door open. Garner was lying on the floor. He had got thus far and collapsed. The fire, having eaten through the bottom of the door on the other side, was within a few inches of his head. Catching Garner under the arms, Sam lowered his head and plunged through the wall of flame in the front bedroom. He gained the window; his clothes were afire. He shoved Garner's body out on the roof, clinging to his feet, and climbed after.

Pausing to slap out the places where Garner's clothing and his own were burning, he eased the inert body to the edge of the roof, and lowered it into the hands waiting to receive it. Yells went up from the crowd. Sam dropped to the ground, felt himself being dragged back.

In the first moment Sam felt strangely uplifted. All blackened and scorched as he was, he snatched up Phyllis in her pretty dress and kissed her on the mouth. She hugged him tightly. "Mr. Sam, I love you," she whispered. Then Phoebe. So he had that to remember. Agnes was kneeling beside her husband. Garner opened his eyes and smiled up at her.

The scene that followed unnerved Sam completely. Everybody rushing up to wring his hand and clap him on the back, men and women laughing and weeping. He turned and fled from it. Running straight through the timber that bordered the house grounds of Locust Grove, he leaped a wall and made his way back to the road through the fields. He never stopped running until he got home.

He dared not stop then because he knew that his neighbors would presently arrive *en masse*. He threw a few things into a satchel, locked up the house and jumped in his car. His tools were already in it. He set off to the south and, making his way around by back roads to the main highway, headed north when he reached the Bay. Already at seven o'clock in the morning he was at Cumberland where he stopped to eat breakfast and to send a telegram to his brother in Grimshaw, Alberta.

ON MY WAY.

Beginning Soon—

THE SMOKING LAND

A New Novel by

GEORGE CHALLIS

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Men rushed into the room, throwing themselves at her, pulling her away from Wally's side

Revolution—With Pictures

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Author of "Skyway to Peril," "Red Chaos by Night," etc.

WALLY SHANNON and his soundman, Joe Gray came to Viscaya—Latin American republic writhing more or less unhappily under despotic reign of Dictator-President Garcia—because the editor of the Apex News Weekly had sent them there to take pictures of some trouble he believed was imminent.

Other newsreel editors had somehow got the same notion, and Wally and Joe found their colleagues there *en masse*. And among them, naturally, was Globe's Two-time Mueller, whom Wally particularly detested.

Things began to happen almost right away. Wally suspected that Two-time Mueller had some shady connection with President Garcia. Mueller certainly seemed to be working for Garcia when he wasn't busy getting into Wally's hair.

When the fruit steamer, the *Admiral Sims*, docked, Garcia's soldiers, as well as the newsreel crews, were there to meet it. There had been a rumor that young Miguel Vallejo, son of the former president, was returning to his native land to overthrow the tyrant. But Miguel had slipped off the boat and was hiding in a small coastal town.

SALLY LANE, also a passenger on the *Admiral Sims*, brings Wally a note from Miguel, whom he had known—and liked—in Panama. Someone must fetch young Vallejo from Santa Ysabel and bring him to the capital—and Wally seems to be elected.

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He and Joe and Sally, who refuses to be left out of whatever is going on, hire a schooner and sail for Santa Ysabel. The captain of the ill-favored vessel is a scoundrel, the ship is barely seaworthy—and Two-time Mueller turns up aboard, a stowaway.

In Santa Ysabel, Wally and Sally get Miguel out of the clutches of Garcia's secret police, but Joe Gray, who has been left aboard the schooner to hold the captain, Two-time and the crew under control, is wounded in a gun fight and pitched into the sea.

BEFORE they have fished Joe out of the water, they watch the schooner sailing away without them. So the four adventurers take the only other possible route back to the capital—through the jungle. They march for endless hours, weary, sore and squabbling among themselves, until Joe, wounded and fever-stricken, drops in his tracks.

Wally decides to push on ahead to get help for Joe. Sally goes with him because he stubbornly refuses to leave her in the jungle; Miguel Vallejo stays behind with Joe.

At the capital the two weary travelers contact General Lobo, chief of Miguel's supporters. But before they can organize a party to go into the jungle for Joe and Miguel, they are besieged in the general's house by Garcia's secret police.

THE house is an armed camp, manned by picked soldiers, ready and waiting for the signal for revolt. But Garcia's men, mysteriously tipped off, attack in force from front and rear. Outnumbered, surrounded, their communications cut, attacked before the final preparations were made, Lobo and his forces face certain extinction. It is only a matter of hours, and relief from the pro-Vallejo Second Regiment seems unlikely to materialize in time.

General Lobo sends word to arouse the people with word that Miguel is in Viscaya. The hour to strike has come. A mob forms in the streets.

Wally learns of a passage connecting the house with the palace just across the plaza. Discovering that Miguel and Joe have been captured and taken there for swift punishment, he makes up his mind to try one desperate, final coup. Taking Sally with him, he forces one of Lobo's men to show him the entrance of the passage.

CHAPTER XX

DARK RESPITE

ALMOST, as she followed Wally Shannon down that sloping passageway into darkness, she could have believed she was back in the jungle again. There was the same utter silence, the same sense of being pressed in by nameless dangers from every side. But the jungle's silence had been a living menace; it had seemed to her she could actually hear the jungle growing. In this tunnel, however, the silence was lifeless, clammy. Her right hand was again gripping Wally's coat; when her left hand, groping blindly, touched the stone wall of this tunnel, she recoiled violently from the cool slimy feel of it.

"You all right?" Wally asked. His voice boomed down the long reaches of the tunnel, going on and on until she could have screamed for it to stop.

"Yes," she whispered, and even that hissing sound raced away, leaving eerie echoes as it went.

"Not much more of this now," he said. "We must be under the plaza already."

Under the plaza, where men were shooting at the *meson* they had just quitted, where men were dying in a welter of blood—and where there was the good sun, and warmth, and familiar things to see—like trees and grass and buildings—even in all that fighting. Sally set her small white teeth and stumbled on, grimly determined not to cry out, not to fall, not to drag too hard on Wally's coat. Her eyes burned from sleeplessness. She closed them. It was as easy to walk with them closed as open—she could see just as far. Then afraid that she might quite literally go to sleep on her feet, she opened them again, blinking rapidly to shake the heavy torpor from her leaden lids.

The inky stones underfoot began to slant upward now. Patiently Sally set her mind to the knowledge that they were almost at the end of the tunnel, almost to the end of this dark, this stillness, this tomb . . .

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After a while, Wally's forward progress became slower. He stopped. She lurched against him, almost fell.

"Easy," he said, quietly. There was a scratching sound. A match flamed enormously, hurting her eyes with its vivid splash of fire. He held it high over his head, squinted under it into the dimness. A scorpion, black and malignant, scuttled away from the alien light.

"Stairs," Wally murmured. "We're underneath the palace, all right!"

But Sally hardly heard him. She was looking at the slimy floors, at the sweating walls, and trying to keep her tattered skirts well away from them. Then Wally was moving ahead and she, still gripping his coat, was following. A dozen steps, perhaps a score.

She felt his body lifting away from her, clung tightly until her groping foot found a stone stair. They mounted through the blackness. She counted fifty-odd, then lost track.

So she had no idea how high they were when, out of that abysmal darkness above, came the sound of a shuffling foot —a small sound in itself, but carrying like a clap of thunder down those invisible stairs.

Wally came instantly to a stop. She could hear him breathing, carefully, from just the top of his lungs, could feel his back muscles slide beneath his coat as his hand came around and dug for his pistol. His other hand, reaching in a circular motion rearward, found her slim shoulder and squeezed it in an urgent signal for silence.

There was no more sound from the stairway above. For hours, it seemed, she and Wally stood silent, probing that blackness with their eyes, reaching into it with their ears, exploring it with their minds.

Then there was a thin rale, as of long-held breath escaping through set teeth.

And almost simultaneously a gun exploded above, blazing a ribbonlike path through the darkness, filling the whole world with shattering sound—and sending a shrill-whining bullet whipping close past Sally's head.

WALLY'S open hand smashed Sally flat against the stone. She could feel his hard body forming a human shield over hers. She pulled her nerves tight, bracing herself against the sound of his firing. The smell of powder smoke drifted down to her and she could smell a faint odor of cognac coming with it. Why didn't Wally shoot?

She heard the rustle of his clothes as he pushed himself upright, inch by inch. He reached into his pocket and from the handful of small change there, selected a heavy piece, a peso. With infinite care he shifted his pistol from his right hand to his left. Slowly he swung his right hand back and with all the strength in his arm, he pitched that coin upwards into the darkness. By the time it struck against the wall, ricocheted and bounced from step to step, his gun was again in his right hand.

Instantly fire spat from that gun up there and a bullet smacked against the wall where the coin had first struck. Before the flare died away, Wally's gun was roaring, jabbing obliquely up into the darkness, slamming its bullets one at a time in a deliberate zigzag pattern around the spot from which that other flame had come.

Sally heard the last two slugs hit. She heard the unseen man up there let out his breath in a long and wheezy sigh. Something hard and metallic clattered to the stone steps and Wally was up and climbing like a sprinter at the sound of the starting gun. But Wally's steps were still slapping the stone when Wally heard a heavy bump. And another. Standing there, her back pressed flat against the wall, she heard the man's body bump, bump, bump down the stairs.

Wally's feet moved quickly. Sally heard a dull sound as of two bodies coming hard together. Then quiet until a match flamed and she saw the black-and-crimson silhouette of Wally above, bending over and examining the crumpled figure of a man in uniform. The light died. There was a sound as of something being pushed.

"Come up. Keep against the left wall."

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She knew her left shoulder was rubbing against the slimy wall, gathering a stain of green as she mounted, step by step, that Stygian stairway. It seemed to her that her senses reached out and located that dead man; she could clearly feel his presence drawing closer and closer as she climbed.

A hand reached out and touched her shoulder.

She screamed, toppled and almost pitched backward into that black stairwell. But the hand closed hard on her shoulder, yanked her upright.

"All right. It's all right."

She was shaking as with a fever chill when his guiding hand eased her up past the spot where she knew a crumpled figure lay limp along the stairs.

"One of the presidential guards," Wally murmured. "I thought this passageway was supposed to be a secret. Viscaya is a place where a secret is something only forty or fifty people know." He grinned ruefully.

AGAIN they climbed, and this time Sally's feet did not drag so, for she was climbing away from that man who, but a minute or two ago had been living and breathing, and was now dead. So this was a revolution—one tiny fragment of it—and in New York she had thought of tropic revolutions as bright adventures, gaily entered into. She had not thought about the men who coughed out their lives in the darkness, nor about the women who would grieve for their dead. It had never occurred to her that stark fear might stab into her heart, nor that she might not eat or sleep for days and days—nor that she, herself, might very soon be dead.

"This," said Wally's voice in a gusty sigh, "will be it. You stay here until I see what's on the inner side of this door."

"I won't stay—"

Wally's hand clapped over her mouth, but his voice was still gentle. "Quiet. There may be someone just on the other side."

His hard hand went away from her mouth. She could hear it sliding softly across a flat surface, a panel, perhaps.

His lips came close to her ear. "Here we go. Take this."

He shoved something into her hand. A revolver, with a smear of something sticky on the butt. She shuddered and knew what hand had held that blood-smeared gun.

A blinding white crack appeared in the black wall beside Wally. It spread, sloped off sidewise at top and bottom. She saw Wally's grim profile, whitely etched against the backdrop of darkness. He was not much to look at now, with his two-day stubble of beard, his bloodshot eyes, his mouth pulled into a thin grim line. He turned his head to see if she were ready and something in Sally's steady gaze held him. On the edge of plunging into this unknown room beyond the door, he stopped short and in that small incoming light the expression on his hard face changed.

He could see her, dimly, out of the pit of blackness, and he could feel the steady tug of her being. All her sweet young curves were outlined in that faint light and the tired droop of her proud shoulders reminded him of the things he had put this girl through during the hours that stretched so endlessly behind them both. There were dark circles beneath the level eyes that were looking into his, and there was a reckless quirk to her tired mouth that he had never noticed there before.

Wally was suddenly conscious of savage excitement stirring his blood. He reached out his left hand, pulled her to him and gathered her into the hard circle of his arm. Standing there, uncaring what tempest of violence might lie scant inches beyond that partly opened door, he tilted up her smooth oval face and kissed it. He knew his bristly chin must be hurting her but he did not care. He knew his lips must be crushing hers, that the strength of his arm must be almost breaking her back—and that, when all this horror and wonder and darkness were done with, she meant to marry Miguel Vallejo—but none of these things mattered at all. He had to kiss and he released her, roughly.

He whirled quickly away from her and took a long breath to steady his jumping

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nerves before he put his weight against that door. His hands were shaking, and so were his knees. Manlike, he was angry at her for making him shake so, as angry as if it had been she, not himself, who had brought all this about. Well, it had been so. Who else had brought the note from Miguel that had touched the spark to the long fuse which was now burning close to the powder magazine?

And then, with his hand reaching out to push the door, he realized how unjust his quick surge of anger was. She had not forced him to go after Miguel. She had been perfectly willing to go alone and would have, unhesitatingly, if he had refused to buy a hand in this jack-pot. The fact was that she had asked no more favors than Joe or Miguel. More than that, she had probably saved his life in the dark patio of General Lobo's house, when the spy's gun hand had been twisting up toward his stomach.

Once again he turned and this time the bitter hardness had gone out of his mouth. Sally was still standing there, looking straight at him with her unreadable blue eyes. He reached out, gently this time, and put his hand on her tired shoulder.

A slow-curving smile lighted all the smooth surfaces of her face. That smile was his reward.

Then, wheeling back to the door, he put his hand against it and pushed.

CHAPTER XXI

MEET PRESIDENT GARCIA

THE door swung open, carrying with it a huge section of bookcase behind which it had been concealed. The effect of its opening was like that of turning up the volume control of a radio set. The noise of distant gunfire, at first scarcely audible, increased until it became a staccato fusillade.

Light increased, too, and Wally, his gun leveled waist-high, stood blinking and vulnerable at the threshold of a library whose four walls were filled from floor to high ceiling with bookcases. He waited until his eyes had been accustomed to the light. Then, stepping quietly on the balls of his feet, he moved out into the room. The only other door was closed, so there was still some small degree of safety, a few moments, at least, during which he might catch his breath and look around. Quickly he walked over to the great French window whence came the sound of firing outside. He discovered that they were on the second story and that the window commanded a perfect view of the plaza and of the house on the other side where General Lobo and his men were carrying on their desperate defense.

Small puffs of gun smoke were drifting away from the windows on all three floors and the chatter of machine-gun fire was continuous. But from this position of vantage Wally could see that it was only a question of time—and not much time—before Garcia's men would triumph.

At least three companies of presidential guards were scattered about the plaza, shooting from behind trees, bushes, overturned benches and stationary motor cars. Three machine guns had been set up near the bandstand and their crews were making dirt fly with entrenching tools, throwing up hasty breastworks to shelter them from the fire from the house. The Pathe truck was still there and with a quick stirring of the pulses Wally saw Georges Mejat operating his camera from the platform, Dupont behind the truck, listening intently to the sound-level in his ear 'phones. One other thing Wally noted in that quick sweep of his eyes; a one-pound field gun was being towed into position by an armored truck. When this began to fire, the end would be close.

"Look!" Sally breathed at his shoulder.

She pointed down the Avenida, then down the Paseo de Marti, to the left. Both broad avenues were clotted with people, and Wally could see more civilians massing up from the rear. Uniformed guards were pressing them back, but more and more were flowing in from the cross streets and adding to the mob which faced the guards.

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There was no time to watch the shifting of that mob, no time to determine whether they were sightseers gathered by the firing, or whether they might be the first arrivals of a rising populace, summoned by General Lobo before his private telephone wire was discovered and cut by the secret police.

Quickly Wally swung back into the room and headed toward the closed door that led—where?

"I remember this room," Sally said, suddenly. "I used to come into this library when I visited here. Miguel's father spent most of his time here."

"What's on the other side of that door?" Wally demanded.

She closed her eyes and tried to remember. But that had been years ago, and now everything was so different. Oh, not the room itself; she could almost have put her fingers on certain books she had read during her visit. But the library was now echoing to the sound of gun fire, and she was tired, and her lips were smarting from the violence of Wally's kiss. Nothing was the same now, nor ever would be again, and it was hard to pin her whirling thoughts to what might be beyond that closed door.

"Well," Wally said, impatiently, "if you can't remember—"

"Wait!" she begged. "I think I remember. There is a hallway out there. It—it leads to sort of an anteroom and beyond that—yes, I remember now. Beyond is the president's office!"

A SLOW grin cracked across Wally's face. He brought his gun up, spun the cylinder and fed in fresh bullets to replace those he had fired at the guard down there. He took Sally's pistol away from her, refilled the empty chambers.

"Listen," he said. "You stay here now and—"

Her stubborn chin came up. "Still trying to make me stay behind?"

He looked at her. "Okay," he said.

He reached for the knob and eased the door inward. He paused, pulled his head around. "Do you remember if the anteroom opens directly into the president's office?"

"I—I think so," she said, faintly.

"We'll find out," he said.

He stuck his head out of the door and looked along a passageway which apparently ran the full length of this wing. A uniformed man hurried out of one door, crossed the hall with rapid steps and dived into another room without looking around.

"Let's go," Wally murmured.

Out into the hallway he strode, a tall and haggard figure, lips compressed, eyes watchful for first sign of an opening door, gun hip-high and leveled down the empty corridor. Behind him Sally hurried, her bright hair collecting all the light there was. Her eyes looked very blue, her lips very red, against the clear whiteness of her skin. Her pistol pulled hard at her slim wrist. Her gaze did not bother with the corridor at all. She just looked at Wally.

For a small instant Wally hesitated at the first door. "The anteroom, you said," he murmured. "Might as well go the whole hog." He turned away and made for the next one. Reaching for the knob, he said in a troubled way, "Our luck's too good." And went in.

An instant later Sally knew their luck *had* been too good. At first glance the big room seemed entirely filled with men.

"*Caballeros*," Wally said, just inside the threshold. "All hands up. This is not my war. I don't want to have to kill anybody."

His voice was icily pleasant. It pulled the men around; its very sureness stopped hands that would have dived for guns. It laid a heavy silence over the office and gave Sally time to come up beside Wally with her big pistol.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said a familiar voice from one of the French windows opposite the door. Two-time Mueller was standing beside a motion picture camera whose lens was pointed down across the plaza. "How did *you* get in here?"

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"You'll be properly damned if you don't reach a little higher," Wally said, pleasantly.

A short, saturnine Latin was exactly in front of Sally's pistol. His expanded pupils were fixed upon it, studying it with close scrutiny. A thin thrill ran along all Sally's nerve ends as she recognized President Garcia. His face was even more cruel than in his pictures. His nose was hooked like an eagle's. His lips were so straight, so bloodless, as to be scarcely lips at all. His fingers, high above his bald head, were hooked into claws.

Garcia said, hardly moving those lipless lips, "There *is* a secret passageway, then, as Corporal Novarro told us."

There was a man standing beside Twotime. He was wearing a telephone headset. An officer stood beside a mammoth mahogany desk. A gun hung from a cordovan belt, but his hands were up. And on the floor in the corner lay two prone figures, but there was no time to look at them in these tightening moments.

"One at a time," Wally said, his voice still cool, take your guns out and toss them over here. First—"

He got no farther. Miguel's voice, stridently urgent, broke through the quiet. His head was lifted from the floor. "Wally, the door! The door!"

That did it. The door was behind Wally, the poised prisoners in front. "Sally, look back!" Wally snapped.

BUT it was already too late. A man crashed into Wally from behind. Then pandemonium. Wally was pitching forward, a man riding him like a drunken jockey. Frantically Sally swung her gun at him but she dared not pull the trigger —Wally and the man who had jumped him had already hit the floor and were turning and twisting in a snarling tangle. Everybody in the room seemed to be racing at her. And at the two men who fought on the floor.

She wheeled, pumped one wildly aimed bullet at a man who mushroomed in size as he galloped at her. But he came on and the full weight of his body smashed into her, throwing her against the wall with bone-crushing force. The heavy gun snapped out of her hand, thudded to the floor and went skittering off somewhere on the smooth marble surface. Pinioned against the wall by the weight of the man —he still had earphones on his head— she heard the Eye's voice cutting through the chaos:

"Don't kill him yet! I want him!"

The man threw his arms around Sally, wrestled her away from the wall. She kicked at him, felt the sharp toe of her shoe strike home on his shin. He slapped her twice, so hard her knees buckled. He pulled her back to her feet, spun her around and locked her wrists with his hand.

"Stand still, you hell cat!" he snarled. "Still, now, or I'll spoil your face!"

Wally was on the floor. She could not see him, but she knew he was there because all the others had converged around him. Soldiers were gushing into the room like water through a broken levee. They were joining those who were trying to get at Wally, trying to drag Wally away from the man down there on the floor.

If Miguel were alive, what was he doing about all this? She got her head around and looked. He and Joe were lying on the floor, their arms and legs were bound. They were straining at their lashings, writhing helplessly.

Wally came bursting through the legs of the surrounding mob of men. On his hands and knees he came charging through, his heavy shoulders bouncing men off like duck-pins. But two soldiers threw themselves on him. Their weight squashed him flat.

Then the others were on him, too. They were fighting one another for a chance to slug him, to kick him, in a frenzy of rage. His body disappeared in the center of that mêlée. Sally shut her eyes, but that did not prevent her from hearing all too plainly the dull sound of their kicking feet, the belly-deep grunts which came for a while from Wally's lips, and then stopped.

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PRESIDENT GARCIA at last pushed his way out of the crowd.

"*Quitate!*" he roared. "Stop it! I must question him before he dies!"

His gun, butt-end first, was in his hand. Savagely he flailed out at the soldiers who were still worrying Wally's body with their feet. Sally saw the butt rake down a soldier's head, leaving a quick stain of blood behind. He knocked them away, one by one, with merciless blows of his pistol.

"Get out of here!" he screamed at them. "Out, dogs, out! In half an hour you can have both the *gringos* to do with as you will! Go, now, before I have you beaten to death with whips!"

Slashing at them he drove them out of his office and carefully locked the door against them. He stood there, panting heavily. There was a long red welt on his cheek bone. He touched it with unbelieving finger, and winced. Two-time Mueller and the officer backed away from Wally's body, breathing hard. The man with the earphones wandered back to the window, where the big camera was, and began to fuss with loops of sound cable.

Sally leaned against the wall, fighting off repeated waves of dizziness. She stared at Wally with dazed, incredulous eyes, not willing to believe that the strong, hard man was finally down.

Wally, on the floor, lifted his head slowly. The others watched him in sultry silence. All but Mueller. His laughter had a wire-thin edge of malice as he said:

"Wake up, Wally, and see me score another beat. Like the one when I cut your sound cable, remember? You borrowed my lens, so I borrowed your camera and sound outfit. You don't mind?"

Wally, holding his head up with an effort, let his drooping eyes travel slowly around the room. Without expression, his gaze touched the two men who lay bound in the corner, Sally, and those who stood gloating over him. His breath ran out in a long, rattling sigh. All his big muscles went limp and his head fell back with a bang on the marble floor.

An icy hand touched Sally's heart.

CHAPTER XXII

A FEW LOOSE ENDS

FOR a heart-stopping moment there was no sound in that big room. No sound that emanated from the room itself, that is. Outside, machine guns, rifles and pistols still roared, and from the other side of the locked door came the sound of many feet shuffling on marble floors. But these were extraneous sounds, unnoticed by those who stared down at Wally's limp figure.

Sally was first to move. She pushed herself away from the wall. There was a gun —Wally's gun—on the floor halfway across the room. She raced for it. But she hadn't a chance. Laughing, Two-time Mueller scooped it up, slipped it in his pocket and stood grinning at her.

"Where's the other one?" the Eye demanded. "The gun the girl had?"

Sally didn't care where it was. She hurried over to Wally. She dropped to her knees and lifted his battered head into her lap.

"I don't see it," Two-time said, looking around the floor. "I guess your men must have carried it out."

Sally did not even hear him. With the hem of her skirt she was wiping away a slow trickle of blood from Wally's lips. Her heart was in her throat, pounding heavily, dully, almost choking her.

"Wally!" she whispered.

But his eyelids did not even flicker. Still grinning, Two-time advanced. He bent over Wally, laid the palm of his hand flat on Wally's chest.

"Not dead," he told the Eye. "But out cold."

"Put him over in the corner with the others," the Eye said, adding, venemously, "for the present."

The officer came across the floor. Reaching down, he took Wally's flaccid wrist and dragged him like a sack of cement over the tiles. He dropped the arm; it fell, a dead weight, to the floor. The officer pushed Wally with his foot, straightening the limp body around beside the

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other two, Miguel and Joe, whose heads turned, watching silently.

"Better tie him," said Two-time Mueller. "He's a hard man to kill."

"I can kill him," said the Eye.

Miguel's voice came from the corner. "Garcia, may God strike you dead!" He cursed the Eye in Spanish, and with words, phrases, that appalled Sally, who had thought never to be appalled again by anything. His voice had taken on a new quality, harsher, deeper, and the ferocity of his words bit even into the consciousness of the Eye.

"For every curse," the Eye roared at him, "you'll have another five minutes in hell before you die!"

"Your Excellency!" Two-time interrupted from the window. "You'd better have a look at this!"

"At what?" the Eye snarled, still glaring down at Miguel.

Two-time beckoned to his sound-man, stepped behind the big camera and squinted through his view-finder.

"That mob," he said, "doesn't look too good."

The sound-man and the officer hurried over to the window and peered out toward the sound of the constant gunfire, but the Eye shrugged contemptuously.

"Did you ever see what happens to a mob when machine guns go into action?" he countered, negligently.

IT was clear he was much more interested in his prisoners than in the mob outside. And so was Sally, on the floor where Wally had first fallen. They were pitiful, the three of them. Their clothing was in rags, bloodstained; it was difficult for Sally to realize that Miguel, staring challengingly up at the Eye, was the Harvard boy with whom she had gone to proms, had walked with under the spreading elms in the Yard, and had strolled with on the decks of the *Admiral Sims*. That was Joe, lying next to Wally. With a stab of misery Sally remembered how Joe had looked, plumpish, merryeyed and acid of speech, that day in her hotel room. Now his clothes, from shoulders to knees, were stiff with dried and blackened blood, covered with dirt and jungle mold. His roundish cheeks had thinned down and his eyes glittered feverishly. And Wally, sprawled so limply, his deep-shadowed lids closed, his breath hissing slowly in and out between his battered lips. Only a few minutes ago those lips had been crushed hard against hers and her heart had beat wildly in—in . . . She knew it now—in ecstacy!

He was hard; that she knew. But it was a hardness that drove through obstacles, dangers—and carried her along with it. And beneath that hardness was a tenderness as profound and as understanding as that of any man she had ever known.

Dully, as she sat there with the sounds of gunfire in her ears and remembered how he had apologized to her when he had been carrying her out of the jungle, how when the need for driving was not as great, he had grinned at her and said, "Good gal!" He couldn't die! His will to live—for her—must be strong enough to defeat death, as it had been strong enough to defeat all human enemies—until now.

A telephone bell rang insistently. The officer answered it. Two-time Mueller and his sound-man were shooting something that was happening out there in the plaza, or beyond. There was a new sound coming up from there, a sound which Sally had never before heard and could not identify; yet it chilled her, made her uneasy, caused her to inch closer to the three men lying so still on the floor.

"Are you getting the roar of that crowd, Thompson?" Two-time asked. "They'll be busting through those lines in a minute. Be sure and get it."

The officer put the telephone down and turned to the Eye, who was still standing near Miguel. But now Garcia was not even looking at Miguel. He was looking toward the window, and his head was cocked in an attitude of listening.

"Your Grace," the officer said, "it is reported that the Second Regiment has

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rebelled, murdering four of its officers. It is now marching on the city, and is not far from the gates."

A slow flush flooded the dark face of the Eye. He stared down at the things that were happening in the plaza.

"By the time the Second Regiment gets here," he snarled, "their revolution will be over. General Lobo will be dead under the ruins of his house and Vallejo will be in the hands of the soldiers—with his arms and legs being pulled off like those of a fly by a small boy!" He stopped and dragged in a deep breath. "Telephone Colonel Brocchi," he commanded in a rush of words, "to start artillery fire on that house in two minutes or to turn over his command to his next of rank. Tell him to order out another company of machine gunners and at the first forward move of that mob to fire, and to keep on firing until I order them to stop—or until there is nobody left alive to fire at!"

SALLY heard him, but what he said hardly registered in her misery-dazed brain. She was looking at Wally and everything in her mind was urging him please not to die, please to get well—for her sake.

His battered face was turned toward the others, toward Joe and toward Miguel, but she could see it, pale and haggard in the bright morning sun. Suddenly her heart skipped a beat. His eyes opened weakly. They focused upon Joe, who was lying quietly watching him. And to her enduring astonishment she saw him—wink. . . .

Joe grinned a grin of entire confidence. He did not look surprised—just confident, as if he had expected all along that Wally would rise from the dead—and wink. . . .

"Under the arm toward you, old-timer," he whispered. "The gun."

The Eye's voice had ceased. All that could be heard now was the chatter of guns outside—and the slow-rising murmur of the mob. Sally, not daring to breathe, saw Wally's eyelids drop. Apparently he relapsed into unconsciousness. So long as she watched him—and this was for some minutes—his lashes did not flicker again, nor did any muscle twitch.

A new sound boomed against the walls of the president's office, the heavy roar of artillery. It seemed to Sally she heard a groan from Miguel, but when she glanced at him his eyes were steady, calculating, fixed upon the Eye, who was still looking out of the window.

"That ends it," said the Eye, in a fully satisfied tone. "Now, with the artillery smashing Lobo's refuge, it's merely a matter of tidying up."

"And boy—oh boy!" Two-time Mueller exulted. "Will I rate a raise when these cans of film go north by plane! Some of it they'll never dare show, but—"

"Why not?" snapped the Eye, looking down into the plaza over Mueller's shoulder. "They're soft, these editors of yours in New York, that's why. They dare not put reality on the screen. Tomorrow I'll announce that I've opened negotiations with our five nearest Central and South American neighbors, and that within a month we'll have welded ourselves into a solid fascist state, and that from now on, the Colossus of the North, the United States, will have no part in our destiny."

A heavy *booooooom* of artillery fire cut him off. He stopped, looked across the plaza. His voice rose to new heights of confidence.

"Half a dozen more shells," he said, gloatingly, "and that house will fall on them! I'll execute every tenth man in the Second Regiment and—" A look of utter savagery twisted his face. His head came around and his eyes struck wickedly at the three men who lay on the floor in the corners. "And with Miguel dead," he shouted, "I'll be secure in this palace until I die of old age."

"Sure," Two-time agreed. He swung his camera to a new angle, made a minute adjustment of the lens and set the shutter to purring.

THE Eye had turned his back to the sound of machine guns, rifles and light artillery out in the plaza. He appeared

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not to hear that obscurely frightening murmur of the crowd, slowly rising in pitch, rising in volume, as the minutes dragged by. Sally, watching him with dull horror, wondered how he could have any other blood in him but the cruel strain of the *Indio*. The light from the windows cut obliquely across his face, pointing up his high cheek bones, emphasizing the concave surfaces of his swarthy cheeks. His eyes, glaring down at Miguel, seemed almost almond-shaped, like those of an Oriental.

"I have not much time," he purred, leaning over Miguel's prone figure. "So we'll have to end this soon. Are you going to tell me the names of your *junta* in this city?"

"No," Miguel said in that new, hard, voice of his.

"Your Excellency!" Two-time Mueller called over his shoulder. I've done a favor or two for you in the last couple of days. Now how about doing one for me?"

"Name it!" snapped the Eye, not taking his gaze from Miguel.

"Don't be too hard on the girl. I've taken rather a fancy to her."

The president's gaze looked over her, thoroughly. It seemed to her that something in her shriveled up, and died.

"You can have her," said the Eye, contemptuously. And then looked down again at Miguel. "Do you know how it would feel," he went on, lashing himself into a frenzy, "if I broke all your arms and legs before turning you over to my soldiers?"

"Rat!" Miguel said in a slurring voice that brought bright crimson to the Eye's skin.

Like a striking snake he bent forward, pulled Miguel's bound arms up. He lifted one knee and put Miguel's arm across it. He began to exert pressure.

"Are you going to tell me those names?" he gritted.

Sweat started out of Miguel's forehead. But he opened his compressed lips only for one word. "No!"

The Eye began to bear down. With one hand on Miguel's wrist, the other on his elbow, he began to bend that arm over his knee. The officer at the telephone watched, licking his red lip. The sound man, listening to something through his earphones, watched too. Even Two-time took his gaze from the view-finder of his borrowed camera, while he looked on.

Miguel's face was contorted. "Ah!" he sighed, a wrenched, dry sound of agony.

Wally's body twitched convulsively. His right arm shot out, burrowed under Joe's rocking figure. In the flicker of an eyelash he was holding Sally's gun—the gun she had dropped to the floor—and its round muzzle was aimed exactly at the Eye's stomach.

Wally's bloody mouth smiled.

CHAPTER XXIII

END OF A DICTATORSHIP

GARCIA'S eyes moved up and contemplated the gun. His mouth opened in an ellipse of astonishment and, as if he had been touching the top of a red hot stove, he dropped Miguel's arm. Wally jacked himself to a sitting position and pushed his left hand into his trouser pocket. The hand came out, jerked toward Sally and Wally's pocket-knife fell at her feet.

"Cut 'em loose."

Sally tore the big blade open. As she went frantically to work on Miguel's lashings she knew that one man, even a man as hard as Wally, could not possibly hold things as they were for more than a few electric seconds. Sawing away at the ropes which lashed Miguel's ankles together, she could *feel* the tension mount around her. She could feel it beginning to surge, without sound, back and forth, higher and higher as the seconds dragged past, and with every second gained she marveled that Wally had accomplished so much.

Wally's voice, brittle as a paper-thin sheet of ice, said, "Two-time, stand still, or I'll let you have it. I wouldn't mind. Honestly."

Then, even as Sally's knife sawed through the last of the lashings on

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Miguel's ankles, the room roared into conflict.

It was Mueller who started it. Wally had seen him getting himself set. He saw Mueller, in a wholly unconscious gesture, wipe the sweat off the palm of his hand, rubbing it very gently against the left sleeve of his coat. He saw emotion drive hard across Mueller's face, thinning down the eyes and dragging at the corners of his mouth. All this in three age-long seconds while all the sound in the room was coming through the windows and from the faint scratching of Sally's knife-edge, eating away at Miguel's bonds.

AND then in one single leap, Mueller hurled his heavy body backward into the unsubstantial protection of the thick velvet drapes which edged the big windows. Even before the curtains had ceased their wild swinging, a gun appeared around their inner edge and blasted at Wally. The bullet whacked into the wall within inches of Wally's propped left elbow. Beside Wally, the Eye was going into action and Miguel was flailing around like a man gone mad. Wally threw his whole attention at that curtain from behind which Mueller was firing. Wally's shots rummaged that hanging fabric, poked it, twitched it, until there came a spasmodic movement behind it which yanked it down from its rings.

Sally's slender body dived toward Joe Gray, bumped Wally's gun arm. He jabbed aside with his elbow impatiently. The falling curtain writhed in a draft. It draped itself over Mueller's figure like a shroud. And that way, with one of his hands still pushing straight out, the other convulsively yanking, tearing, at the suffocating thing, Mueller stood there in that hell of confusion like a spook at a costume party. Perhaps there was a bullet hole in the thick fabric through which the man could see. His gun wavered, leveled straight at Wally's body. But Wally, still on the floor, steadied himself and pumped one more bullet across. He saw the fabric twitch, heard that slug go ripping through something more solid than velvet. The enshrouded figure bent midway. Silently, like the ghostly thing it seemed, the curtain and the man tangled within it, flopped forward to the floor, hit with a dull crash, rolled over once and lay still.

Sally's strained voice lifted above the racket. "Here, Joe! The Eye's gun!"

Over Wally's head projected a bloody arm—and a gun. The gun spat flame. Wally, rolling over to get into this, saw the uniformed officer—Garcia's aide—running toward the door. Wally pulled his own gun up for a snap shot, but before he had aimed it he knew there was no need to pull the trigger. The officer's gun was tumbling out of his hand and he was bending over as if suddenly smitten with a bellyache. It doubled him up, but somehow his feet were still running as if he had lost the power to stop them. Bending lower and lower, the man took four or five more steps. With a sickening crash his down-hanging head struck the door and he fell as limply as if somebody had suddenly jerked all the bones out of his body.

Something was happening where Miguel and the Eye were rolling over and over on the floor. But there was another man somewhere to be handled. Mueller's technician. Wally's eyes found him. He was standing against the wall in a chalky agony of fear. The headset was still in place, but his gun was on the floor and his shaking arms were straight up over his head.

"Kick that gun over here, you!" Joe's voice boomed.

Wally swung the other way and scrambled to his feet. Sally appeared from somewhere and was standing close by him. Together they saw an extraordinary thing. Miguel, the Harvard man, the scholar, the idealist, had Garcia in the corner and his flailing fists were ripping Garcia's face into a bloody pulp. Even as Wally's narrowed eyes struck at the two, Miguel dived straight at the Eye's waist. Pinned there in the corner, the Eye could not get away, but he hammered down at Miguel's head with both fists, then brought his hands around and raked upward at Mig-

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uel's down-turned face with his pronged fingernails.

"Get out of the way, kid!" Wally rasped. "I'll take him!"

AND he brought his gun up to let the Eye have it. But Miguel, feet a-spraddle, suddenly lifted, and the Eye fell forward over Miguel's straining back. Miguel straightened up, turned and began to plod steadily toward the window, carrying his writhing burden. Wally caught one glimpse of Miguel's face. It was no longer weak, no longer sensitive. It was twisted into lines of savage fury, the face of a Latin gone berserk.

"Miguel!" Sally screamed.

But there was no stopping him. The Eye jerked in his arms, hammered his face, head, shoulders, with frantic fists, but Miguel did not seem to feel the blows. The room reverberated with sound. Gun butts thundered against the locked door from the other side; three shots in quick succession crashed through the panel; men were yelling in the corridor. A tornado of noise was rising from the plaza, coming in through the window. The sound of firing was constant, but the real noise was from thousands of human throats—the rising snarl of a mob running amok.

None of these, however, were as terrible as the steady tramp of Miguel's feet as he carried his squirming, twisting, fighting load across that marble floor. There was something implacable about those footsteps, marching step by step toward changing the destiny of a nation.

"Look out for the camera!" Wally yelled.

Miguel carefully side-stepped the tripod standing on the sill of the long French window. With equal care he stepped over the twisted sound cable. Now and for the first time the Eye seemed to realize what was going to happen to him. He lifted his contorted face, cast one wild glance at the window. Fear drove all the color out from under his skin. He opened his mouth and began to scream. He stopped hammering at Miguel's head and tried to throw his arms around Miguel's neck.

For a long, long moment Miguel made an unforgettable figure as he stood silhouetted there against the bright morning sky. He was perfectly still, looking out over a plaza swarming with people. The Eye writhed, squirmed, but Miguel, possessing more strength than he knew, did not seem to heed. The mob was flowing over the plaza in a shifting, streaming black mass, sweeping over the machine gunners by sheer force of numbers, leaving still figures before the guns, but leaving the men of the gun crews dead behind them, too.

Miguel lifted his voice in a stentorian roar.

"Here!" he bellowed. "Here is your dictator!"

And the Eye, his scream cutting shrilly through the greater noise from below, went whirling out of the window, turning end over end like a stuffed doll as gravity hurried him down to his people below. Their hungry arms stretched up to welcome him.

Sally heard the sound he made when he struck. But she did not, mercifully, see what happened when the people whom the Eye had ruled for so many long and terrible years closed in around that still and silent figure. . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

EXCLUSIVE

"JOE!" Wally said in a thin, strained voice.

Joe Gray, bloody, battered and feverish, his shoulders dragging, looked at his partner. Wally was standing just to one side of the locked door, pistol in hand. Bullets were spatting through the panel and chipping away the plastered wall opposite. Even as Joe moved painfully toward his partner, Wally sent three answering shots through the door and for a moment there was something almost resembling quiet out in that hall.

But there was no quiet outside the pal-

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ace. Machine guns were still chattering away. Not as many as before, however, and they seemed to come from directly beneath the room. The crackling of pistols and rifles was almost constant. And above all that was the most horrible sound in the world—the screaming of a mob gone wild.

"Miguel!" Wally yelled. "Come over and help hold this door or you'll never—"

A tremendous crash against the bulging panel blanked out the rest of his warning, but Miguel, his face—his new face—hard and grim, swung around and came back into the room. Mueller's technician was still against the wall, all power to move washed out of him by his terror. Miguel tossed him one contemptuous look, then picked up the pistol which was still at the man's feet.

"I heard 'em yelling for a machine gun!" Wally cracked. "That'll be bad."

At that very moment there was a staccato *tac-tac-tac* from the other side of the door. Ragged round holes began to appear just above the knob. Sheets of plaster fell away from the opposite wall and dust drifted in clouds through the room. The bullet holes tattooed their dotted line above the knob, turned and moved downward with extraordinary speed. In another minute they would have cut a square path around the knob and a small pressure would make the door swing inward.

Wally drove his big body toward the inner edge of the door. He put his gun close to the panel, low, and just beyond that rain of steel-jacketed death that was sweeping irresistibly in. Aiming obliquely upward, he pulled the trigger until the hammer clicked emptily. There was a hoarse scream from outside and the line of bullets coming through the panel veered sharply down, then stopped.

Joe, lumbering awkwardly, knelt beside Wally and pitched his slugs through that panel, but in a moment the whole door trembled to a new shock of smashing shots from outside. Miguel, standing solidly behind Joe, emptied his gun at the door. But the panel was visibly weakening. Stopping that machine gun fire was like trying to sweep back the ocean.

"Out the window!" Joe yelled when a long ragged crack started in the perforated line above the door knob.

"No use," Miguel snapped. "The guards are holding the ground floor against the mob. Machine guns just underneath. Might as well take it here as there."

Wally stared hopelessly down at his empty pistol. He spread his big hands apart, then slowly, reversed the gun to use it, butt-end first, as a club.

"No more bullets," he said, dully.

He stood up and wheeled around, with his back to the others. With one finger he uptilted Sally's chin. He bent down and kissed her.

"I wish," he said in a voice that was no longer harsh, but gentle, regretful, "that I'd met you years ago. Now go over in that corner over there and wait. Maybe there'll be an officer out there who'll—" his voice faltered, then came strong again —"who'll make them behave."

She couldn't answer him with words.

Joe lurched to his feet. On his fever-flushed face came a rueful smile. "Remember, big boy?" he said, looking at Wally as he reversed his own empty gun in his one good hand, "remember, I had a hunch about this party?"

"Yeah," Wally said, drawing a long breath, "I remember."

There was a sudden silence out in the hall. Wally's hand went out and pushed Sally behind him.

"I guess," he said grimly, "they'll be coming in now."

BUT they did not come in. That brief silence out there was smashed into a thousand bits by a new roar of gunfire somewhere down the hall to the right. There were cries, shouts, a few shots from outside the door—but not at it. And in another moment the sound of racing feet percolated through the bullet-holes in the panel. Guns slammed viciously from both ends of the hall now; none from directly

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in front of the door. Then there was an onward rush of footsteps outside.

A familiar voice roared through the panel. "Garcia, surrender in the name of the people! Open that door or we break it in!"

Miguel's voice lifted in an exulting yell. "General Lobo!" he screamed. "It is I, Miguel! Don't shoot!"

And he threw open the door.

On the other side of the threshold stood the tall old soldier, staring with amazed eyes at the four who were clustered there before him. And beyond were fifteen or twenty of Lobo's loyal soldiers, Antonio among them.

"Go down there," Lobo roared at his men, "and wipe those guards out if they don't surrender!"

And then he stepped across the threshold, put his strong old arms around Miguel and kissed him on both cheeks.

"My boy!" he said, shakily. "I—I had given up hope. We came through that tunnel, that passageway, seeking only revenge for your death!"

He put out his hand toward Wally, but Wally was already running toward the window, where the big camera stood above its nest of twisted sound cables. And behind Wally ran Sally.

"Joe!" Wally yelled over his shoulder. "Come here and find the noise level of this mob. It'll be over in a minute, and we've got to shoot it."

Joe, stepping carefully as a sleep-walker, obeyed that familiar call to duty. His feverish eyes, weak without their glasses, searched for his ear 'phones, found them on the bald head of Mueller's sound man.

"Rat!" he said, snatching them off. "Use my sound outfit, would you? If I ever see you again, anywhere in the world, I'll pull your heart out and make you eat it!"

"Hurry up, Joe!" Wally shouted. "Here comes the Second Regiment down the Avenida! Getting it? And the firing has stopped downstairs. It's stopping everywhere. Nice of Mueller to get some of it for me. Okay, Joe?"

"I'm getting it," Joe replied.

Wally swung the big camera to get a shot of the crowd below. Then, carefully avoiding something directly beneath the window, a scrambling of people around something which could never be shown on any theatre screen, he focused for a long shot up the Avenida where the Second Regiment was marching through a cheering crowd.

"Exclusive!" he murmured.

He took his finger from the button and the clicking of the shutter ceased. Enthusiasm washed some of the tired lines out of his face as he looked from Sally to Joe, to Miguel and then back to Sally.

"You wouldn't care about sticking around San Pedro any longer, would you?" he asked, gently.

"No," she said, repressing a shudder. "I wouldn't."

A white grin split his haggard and bloodstained face. He looked at Joe, who was staring at him intently.

"Old-timer," he said to Joe, "the only way we can get these negatives to New York fast enough is to fly 'em up. We'll get you shot full of quinine at the hospital, and sewed and bandaged up, and then we'll catch tonight's Clipper for home. All three of us. Remember we had a date to march up Fifth Avenue in the Easter parade? Well, there'll be three of us, not two."

Joe's feverish eyes searched Sally's face intently. The pause grew uncomfortable, but Sally did not avoid his gaze.

"You decided you didn't want to be a president's wife?" Joe asked her, quietly.

"Yes," Sally said, soberly, "I decided."

Joe sighed and his lips stretched in a smile that was not altogether convincing. "That's all right, then," he said. "Sure, old-timer, we'll make the parade, all three of us. Pack up your film cans, and let's go. Before those crazy *Spiks* decide to throw another revolution. . . ."

THE END

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Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

DUE to popular demand, the Editors have been gagged this week. They may continue to make shrill outcries between the lines; but in the main they will be hushed in favor of such readers as the gentleman below. This man decided to sit down and just tell us quietly why he likes ARGOSY and what he expects to get from it. Here are the conclusions of

CHRIS HOLT

Possibly I should not admit that I am a school teacher and read ARGOSY since there will be many who will say that possibly I could improve my professional standing by reading something more solid and intellectual. Nevertheless I have had the good fortune to be a reader of ARGOSY long before it became ARGOSY. My first experience with the magazine was long before the United States entered the World War. I don't recall the date, but at that time I was a little shaver and had my dad bring the magazine home with him from the train.

Frankly, I don't read ARGOSY with any thought of improving my intellectual standing, or with a salary increase in mind. I read ARGOSY for the thrills, excitement, adventures, and freedom that I get from it—that I can not get in the teaching profession. There is plenty of excitement to teaching school, but not of the same type that is to be found between the covers of ARGOSY. It has a variety that is not to be found in any of the other popular priced magazines. I like most of the authors.

I certainly can't agree with those who wish to change ARGOSY in any way. I, too, would like to have a number of things done to it if it were written especially for me alone. I realize, however, that there are many readers of the magazine that like those features I don't particularly care for and probably dislike slightly those that I am very partial to. It seems to me that it is a give and take proposition. We lose if we win. I'd say let it alone. The magazine is good the way it is. I read it for the stories I like. No one forces me to read any of those that don't appeal. Certainly all the authors can't be Adamses, Burroughses, Tuttles, Wortses or Brands. My favorite is Eustace L. Adams because his stories are so obviously straight to the point. He never beats about the bush, camouflages his raw moments, or covers the bad with sugar. Life is like this. The bad spots are always before us in all their repulsiveness. We have to see them however hard we try to turn our heads or close our eyes. Adams' stories are like this. He writes them as he sees them —and I imagine he has seen most of that which he writes about.

Just let the magazine alone. It's getting along. The kickers don't have to buy it. Even if they quit—I expect that there will be enough of the supporters remaining to keep the wolf from your door.

Sharples, W. Va.

AND since we can hardly argue with Reader Holt's statements, we, never being able to let well enough alone, will plunge right in where the smoke is thickest, into a little battle between readers. Says

CLIFFORD BALL

Will you permit me to answer Mr. Gerald E. Linsay's communication published in the issue of March 27th?

Dear Mr. Linsay:

I compliment you on having belonged to the best branch of service ever produced by the U. S. A.; I wish I could claim the same. I appreciate the pride you must feel as you recall the period of your enlistment. But aren't you being a trifle harsh concerning the intellect of the common-place, mediocre reader (such as myself), when you infer that we can not distinguish the difference between a "dreadnaught of the Navy and a pleasure yacht"?

You also mentioned the "many savage beasts of the jungle." I have encountered a few myself, Mr. Linsay, and I see no reason why Mr. Burroughs should not employ incidental sequences involving fights between such animals, even if they are purely imaginary. If historians have discovered the bones of such animals interlocked in death throes surely a writer should be able to conceive and describe that age-old conflict. I like his stories. Many others like them also, as you may ascertain by checking on your local dealer's weekly sales.

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You also say that the magazine in the past "seemed to select stories having a moral or decent plot."

May I suggest, Mr. Linsay, that you reach for your Bible? It's very moral. You may find a reference to a character called "The Witch of Endor." Rather supernatural, of course, but who are we to argue with such a positive oracle?

Incidentally, I write for those magazines you have defined as "cheap trash." Probably it is strange that the publishers continue to sell them. Perhaps the world is wrong, Mr. Linsay, and you are right. If you are interested enough, you will find some of my "cheap trash" in the May issue of "Weird Tales."

I might also mention that I have on various occasions been shot, stabbed and bludgeoned. Once, in Ohio, I fell down a sixty-foot embankment with a box containing one hundred and twenty-five sticks of dynamite. Give me your "savage beasts"!

Astoria, L. I.

IF you've already heard too much praise of *Annapolis, Ahoy* you needn't read what comes next. But we must admit we were immensely pleased to hear from

G. A. WRIGHT

Here it is: Can't keep still any longer. I am sixty-seven today and have just finished reading "Annapolis Ahoy" for the third time. I will keep the seven volumes containing this story as long as I live. No crooked gamblers kidnaping the hero and his friends finding him and rushing him back on the field to win the game in the last sixty seconds of play. Just a great big one man football team.

Characters in this story are not miracle makers, but just the kind of people met every day. Keep your characters true to life, Mr. Bruce, and your stories will be read long after you are dead.

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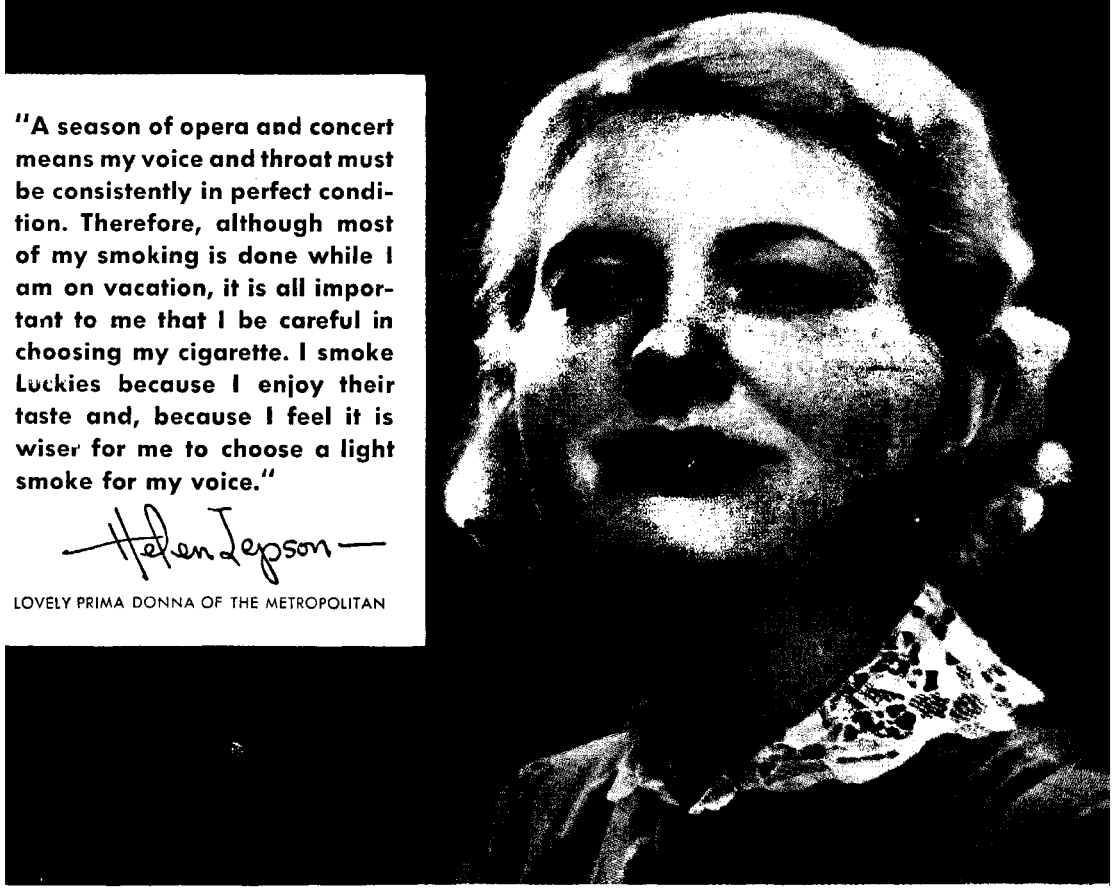

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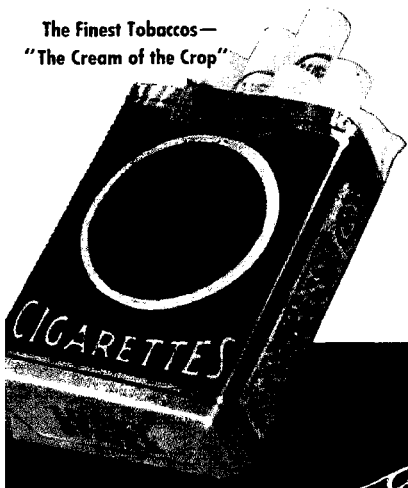

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